

## DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION



# DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

(A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE)

*Edited by*  
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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
INDRAPRASTHA ESTATE, RING ROAD, NEW DELHI-110002

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NEW DELHI

1988

PRICE { INDIAN : Rs. 100.00  
ABROAD : £ 15.00 \$ 30.00



PRINTED AT : SWATANTRA BHARAT PRESS, 423 ESPLANADE ROAD,  
DELHI-110006.



## FOREWORD

All through the ages in India the district has been the principal area of state activities and after independence and the adoption of planned development, its importance considerably increased. While village assemblies were allowed to function for limited purposes by all governments in the past, the administration of the district remained heavily centralised under the overall control of a single officer who always was regarded as the representative of the government in his jurisdiction.

In modern times, the concept of democratic decentralisation was put into practice during the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon and the self-governing institutions at the local levels functioned with a large measure of success in the provinces until the attainment of political freedom.

There was, of course, a modicum of national enthusiasm to bring about decentralisation of power in the first two decades of independence and as a result, an improved version of local self-government was devised. The states which accepted it, introduced variations in it as to justify their requirements which perceived a role for the district officer in development almost differing with each of them. In some states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and till recently in Karnataka, he has been made the pivot of development but in some other states like Gujarat and Maharashtra, he is given few functions peripheral to it. In no states, however, the importance of the traditional functions of the district officer as related to revenue administration and law and order is minimised because it cannot simply be underestimated even as a necessary prop to any stable developmental efforts.

Reforms as well as changes in the district administration are indispensable for its effectiveness and there is an urgency for the redetermination of the role of the district officer. There has been a continuing debate in the country as to what should be the functions and powers of the district officer in a democratic set-up but no viable conclusions are yet

crystallised. But it is being gradually realised that continuing denigration of the institution will only be dysfunctional to governmental effectiveness, and there is need to reinforce the office through facilities and aids which science and technology have made available.

This volume has taken shape out of a national seminar on the theme held in the Indian Institute of Public Administration. It consists of two parts, the papers presented to the seminar and the substance of the discussions topic-wise organised in the form of essays. The volume presents a fine blend of knowledge and experience and unfolds a new perspective for the study of district administration. It also clearly brings out the significance of the political environment which determines the effectiveness of the district administration.

Ostensibly the book is a laudable venture towards overcoming the dearth of literature on district administration and widening the horizon of its study. On the whole, it bears the imprint of scholarship and professional expertise. The editor has applied himself diligently, imaginatively and meticulously to accomplish his task.

NEW DELHI  
MARCH 14, 1988

T.N. CHATURVEDI

## PREFACE

The Indian Institute of Public Administration has been from its inceptive stages concentrating on the study of district administration and has in the past published a few volumes and special issues of its journal covering certain aspects of the subject.

This volume, however, presents a comprehensive view of the district administration both in theory and practice and contains the wherewithal to inspire new thoughts on the subject.

I am sure that this volume will be highly useful to the scholars of public administration and also for the purposes of training.



NEW DELHI  
MARCH 1988

S. RAMANATHAN  
*Director*  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume consists of selected papers and topic-wise summaries of proceedings of 'the national seminar on district administration' organised by the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi in collaboration with the Department of Personnel, Government of India, from February 21-23, 1983.

The editor and coordinator of the seminar expresses his deep gratitude to Mr. T.N. Chaturvedi, the then Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs and Secretary to the Department of Justice and presently Comptroller and Auditor General of India, who as the chairman of the valedictory session with intellectual earnestness has taken the seminar to the point of its triumph and who has now generously contributed a succinct and lucid foreword that enhances the value of this volume.

He is sincerely thankful to Mrs. Noorjahan Bava, Reader in Public Administration, University of Delhi; Mr. M.K. Gaur, Assistant Editor, *Indian Journal of Public Administration*; Mrs. M. Lakshmiswaramma, Miss Sarala Rao, Dr. J.N. Upadhyay and Dr. B.M. Verma, Lecturers in the IIPA; Dr. B.R. Sharma, Dr. R.K. Tiwari and Dr. R.K. Wishwakarma, Readers in the IIPA; who acted as rapporteurs for the various sessions of the seminar.

The editor and coordinator is particularly indebted to Mr. S. Ramanathan, the Director of the Institute who has been the source of inspiration behind the publication of this volume.

His special thanks are due to Miss Sujata Singh for the help she rendered as the assistant coordinator of the seminar and to Mr. B. Haridasan for preparing the typescript.

S.N. SADASIVAN



## ABBREVIATIONS

BDO	:	Block Development Officer
CADA	:	Command Area Development Authority
DDC	:	District Development Council
DPADA	:	Drought Prone Area Development Agency
DPAP	:	Drought Prone Area Programme
DPDC	:	District Planning and Development Council
DRDA	:	District Rural Development Agency
DRO	:	District Revenue Officer
GRM	:	Grassroots Manager
IAAP	:	Intensive Agricultural Area Programme
IADP	:	Intensive Agricultural District Programme
IAS	:	Indian Administrative Service
IRDP	:	Integrated Rural Development Programme
MFAL	:	Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers
MLA	:	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	:	Member of Parliament
NREP	:	National Rural Employment Programme
PERT/ CPM	:	Programme Evaluation Review Technique/ Critical Path Method
SFDA	[:	Small Farmers Development Agency
TDP	:	Tribal Development Programme
UP	:	Uttar Pradesh
VLW	:	Village Level Worker





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(As in February, 1983)

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## INTRODUCTION

The district is a territorial formation which India has contributed to the world administrative culture. The first ever systematic organisation of territories for administrative purposes was done by the Mauryas (324-232 BC) and the pattern they evolved had been so foolproof that it stood the test of centuries to be adopted by all succeeding imperial powers, the Guptas, the Mughals and the British to mention a few. The district administration in India from the very outset has been highly centralised and in the Mauryan empire the rajuka (district officer) of the ahara (district) was invested with not only executive and judicial powers but also military authority.

The Mughals made the *amil guzar* (*krori*) of the *sarkar* (district) equally powerful and although they separated the revenue administration from the general administration at his disposal were put the services of the police by the *foujdar* (provincial military-police head). The British with certain modifications had chosen the same territorial pattern because it was primarily suited to their imperial objectives and the people had age-long experience with its operation. For the consolidation of the empire and enhancing the efficiency of the administration, the British had introduced at times changes in the territorial configuration but they hardly made a real departure from the system evolved by the Mauryas.

For a long time the British believed that larger districts were administratively economic and conducive to sustain the importance of the district officer as the representative of the government. Towards the close of the 19th century, they increasingly realised the inter-relationship between population and territory in the administrative context and were inclined to entertain the idea of 'optimum district' which, however, finally they left more as a matter of judgement than as an attainable reality. Some of the commissions appointed to consider the question of administrative reforms, evolved

certain workable formulas for an optimum district mostly in terms of the size of population but they could not reach an optimum by establishing an ideal correlation between population and territory.

It is not feasible to find criteria for the creation of an optimum district in a vast country of wide diversities like India and what is optimum for Kashmir may be its negation in Kerala. The optimum as applied to the formation of district is an elusive concept but for the creation of a manageable district as required by developmental objectives and for the purposes of public tranquillity, workable formulas can be evolved. Rationalisation of districts for achieving their manageability is an urgent need of administration in India. It is equally vital to the systemic cohesiveness and organic growth of the district set-up.

For its integrity, discipline and direction and orderly interaction between its constituent parts for the efficient performance of its diverse functions and smooth periodic reorganisation indispensable for systematising its growth, it should be brought within the bounds of a sound theory of territorial administration. One of the prime considerations in determining the manageability of the district should be its productivity and its potentials for progress.

Although there has been enormous growth of literature of public administration, a theory of territorial administration has not yet found its place in it nor a principle could be found to establish an appropriate interrelation between spatial dimension and demographic limit. The use of theory, in spite of its assured efficacy, is not a palatable suggestion in the area of administrative functions and as a reflex, it is flouted by the bureaucrat and resisted by the politician. The discipline of working in accordance with the tenets of a theory is alien to Indian administrative culture three main components of which are impulse, intention and instinct.

The behaviour of the administration is determined largely by expediency, ego-centrism and individual pragmatism, rather than by application of values, objectivity of action and spirit of public service. Conscientious adherence to a well formulated theory alone will create a climate for discipline, obtaining the faith of the people in the ideological foundation

of the state, forging democratic convictions pronouncedly wanting in the district administration, motivating the personnel and identifying popular aspirations with the aims of development. It is an irony that India is the only country where ideals are disparaged as illusions.

The hostility against the theory is in a way attributable to the contradiction between intellectual standards and political ambition on the one side and the disharmony between the acquisition of knowledge and bureaucratic style of functioning on the other. A scientifically structured theory with practical orientation, embodying a philosophy of healthy functional interaction between the district and its people is of utmost importance to the territorial administration in India.

The most obvious defect of the district administration from its inception has been its over centralisation. While the traditional principle of unity of command as exemplified by a single executive at the top may be useful for an imperial state system, it is outmoded and has outlived its utility in the context of democracy and development. In western free societies like the United Kingdom district level administration has been a local democracy, and in France the most powerful prefect has been made recently commissioner of the republic to be in charge of public order and his erstwhile authority has been transferred to an elected general council.

The collector as district officer is becoming increasingly ineffective paradoxically because he has been over-armed with powers and over-loaded with functions as constraints of time overwhelm his freedom of action. During the British period he was rightly made the representative of the government but now he in fact is only a convenient instrument of the political executive less resistant and more obedient than an elected district council and its president. He is the only bureaucrat groomed to function in a democratic context and it is because of his protective existence, the superstructure of Indian democracy is without a strong substructure.

The politician on account of the apprehension of his being challenged by the emergence of a powerful second line leadership and the bureaucrat due to his inherent fear of losing his self-importance and authority, are disinclined to the development of the district into a local democracy. Both seek justifi-

cation for their attitudes to democratic decentralisation in the intensely fragmented society where mutually suspicious and, divergent social groups are engaged in interminable conflicts unwilling to come to terms for working out a system of local self-government. It is in the ultimate analysis the pettiness of the politician and arrogance of the bureaucrat that suppressed the intellectual wisdom essential for enduring social compromise and the propagation of ideas essential for social integration through stable and irreversible changes.

A full-fledged system of democratic decentralisation in the district is irrefutably the means Indian democracy has to rely on for its survival. The ideal solution for India's development is not concentration of authority in a single officer at the helm of the district but undoubtedly devolution of power to healthy representative institutions and their ability to inspire people's participation for their effective functioning.

The hypocritic and servile nature of Indian society can be transformed only when it produces bold, self-respecting, sturdy men taking pride in intellectual qualities for the task of nation building. The self-confidence and self-esteem of the people cannot be raised unless they are given power and habituated to use it with self-restraint and responsibility.

After independence the district administration has been in a continuous state of flux. Experiment after experiment has been tried to reform it, but with every experiment, it has become more amorphous and functionally anomalous serving neither the cause of local democracy nor the traditional pattern of centralisation. The district offices have become unwieldy as the sizes of many of the districts, and their lack of cohesiveness tends to defy the golden rules of efficient management. The scattered records, the cluttered desk, the archaic style of transactions which keeps the public lingering on as motely crowd in their premises and the hurried groping for misplaced or simple items of information contribute to their confusion.

Whatever the claims and pretence, the district officer is not the legendary Hercules to cope with the rapidly proliferating functions nor has he the pontific infallibility to take numerous decisions or give judgements that do not violate the norms of justice. The fact that he is an average mortal cannot be con-



ceased in the glamour of his service or in the prestige of his office. As a result of political and administrative behaviours, his tenure has become too short and to make him a repository of powers which he cannot exercise in practice and assign to him functions which he is unable to perform, will subject his office to severe strains to bring it on the verge of dysfunction.

The frailty of human intellect and the limitations of human understanding cannot be ignored even if the collector is given competent assistants to discharge independently some of his major duties.

Transference of a function will no way absolve him of its responsibility but transference of both will be as good as setting up another centre of power in no sense better than democratic decentralisation. The fast pervading departmentalism has made deep dent into the collector's authority for coordination, and numerous directions and interventions from the central level to the local, have made him more hesitant than determined.

Studies indicate that of the available time, the collector spends approximately 35 per cent for hearing complaints mostly against the police and about 45 per cent in routine correspondence and the remaining for other purposes including protocol, meetings and discussions. Once it is conceded that the survival of democracy in India, is contingent upon the successful functioning of self-governing local institutions, the collector should be made commissioner of public security to whom the police should be made answerable. He must have an independent machinery for investigation to deal with crimes and offences affecting public peace. A citizens' council consisting of distinguished public men of proven integrity should advise him in his work.

Through the centuries, the district for the majority of the people has been according local finality in matters pertaining to their individual and collective life. It has been a sub-state beyond the borders of which only an influential or insistent few seek solutions to their unsolved problems. The arable land has been in the possession of powerful communities who have the means to thwart official move or circumvent any legislation seeking to fix a ceiling on it.

Revenue administration is largely confined to the collection of tax and cess and it did not think in terms of an efficient land management with the object of improving productivity and potentials for local employment. In the new economic development, there has been a steady mobility of labour and the landless from the rural areas to the urban enclaves and industrial pockets. To the educated, the district especially with rural orientation provides little incentive to remain within. Ostensibly, the local finality offered by the district is no more satisfying to several groups. Industrial deconcentration and balanced economic growth with equitable redistribution of land and development of local democracy, may restore in a large measure, local finality to the life in the district.

It is a simple tenet of morality that every life that has taken birth on the soil is entitled to a share of the soil and administration of the district should be armed with powers to follow the tenet in actual practice. An independent dwelling satisfies the first condition and assures the minimum environment for human dignity and human development. The pattern of land ownership, however, can be changed only when the people are wide awakened on the question of human rights and have the will to accord full recognition to them in the diligently honest functioning of the institutions of local democracy. The transformation of the collectorate type of administration into a representative district government is a logical imperative of the administrative system in India and an essential ingredient that should go into the intellectual and moral foundations of Indian democracy.

The prominence of the district officer in the conventional administration is not derived from his knowledge or rare specialisation or his personal attributes but merely the gift of the authority invested in him. The political executive has relied so heavily on that authority that it has virtually become the hardest obstacle to redefining the role of the collector in the event of the setting up of a true local democracy. As democracy is a way of life punctuated by frugality, it is not an under-developed economy but political backwardness that forms a stumbling block in the path of democratisation of the district administration. If the people at the grassroots level cannot be trusted with self-rule, hardly any trust can be

reposed in the representative institutions at the state and central levels.

The Indian Institute of Public Administration, therefore, thought that a dialectical approach to the question in the form of convening of an all-India seminar of experienced administrators, academics and trainers, should be made. For over 40 years, the district, has been a ground for organisational experiments and exercises which have hardly contributed any vicissitude administratively significant. A plethora of agencies and crowd of programmes created for development overlooking the relations contemplated by the fundamental law, in reality enhanced the centralisation which could not take care of the drain of funds and the diversions of benefits. The seminar was, therefore, expected to discuss issues freely, examine the existing structure of the district administration objectively and serve as source of stimulant views and freshening ideas useful for its rationalisation. Frequent interference with it on the pretext of introducing reform has only pushed it to a fluid state and provided reasons for indefinitely postponing its democratisation.

The book partly consists of background papers prepared for the seminar by the participants and partly the proceedings processed into the form of essays. Many distant journeys have been undertaken into the realm of administration to make them up-to-date and prolonged meditative effort of literary nature has been put in, to make them more coherent and readable. The piquancy of concatenating the broken links of discussion was rewarding. Even so, some of these essays may not appear to distinguish themselves in conceptual articulation and theoretical sophistication but they are the outcome of actual experience to provide the student of administration insight into the working of Indian administration. More literature in the subject and its vivid understanding may forge the political will and make the social preparation for innovation in the administration outmanoeuvring the impervious bureaucracy.

S.N. SADASIVAN



**PART I**  
**PAPERS**



# *District Level Coordination in India*

*S.N. Sadasivan*

In recent times inventive research has forged several tools and techniques to aid and simplify the process of management. Nonetheless, a major management function which becomes increasingly complex and still demands a greater amount of personal capacity and skill is of coordination. In the bureaucratic pattern of administration which resists change and innovation and where the conventional methods are largely employed for the purpose of coordination, efficiency is more desired than realised. As an organization expands, it has to be suitably restructured or systematically reorganised, taking into consideration its objectives to facilitate effective coordination.

Except for certain minor variations, the district administration in India is uniform in all states and works centred round a single officer. During the British time when administrative knowledge was confined to a privileged few, the district administration in India had earned copious encomiums for its efficiency and invited caustic comments against its conservatism. The British are conservative even in their revolution, but in a religiously feudal country like India their relatively rational and reformatory approach to the administration of the district could make a deep impact mainly because it was an adoption with adaptation which they boldly carried out.

## *District as Principal Unit of Administration*

Despite the dividing line between the Centre and the states, the government that is perceptibly real for the people is only

in the district, a clearly defined tract in which the people finds local finality in many matters associated with their day-to-day life. While each district in India has a historic past, its modern 'form and shape' largely owes to a policy of territorial consolidation astutely conceived and skilfully executed by the British. Each district is carved out to be a viable administrative unit for interdependent living of its inhabitants upon the fundamental assumption that land was the prime possession and primary source of wealth in a predominantly agrarian country.

The system of territorial administration that exists in the country was originally evolved during the time of the Mauryas but it was retained with minor variations mostly terminological by every successive regime alien or indigenous in view of the incomparable advantages it offered in terms of centralised administrative direction aimed at comprehensive social control. The rajuka in the Mauryan empire was not only the head of his district (ahara), but was also the principal coordinator of the revenue, general and military functions in his jurisdiction.

As the Mughals separated the diwani (revenue administration) from the foudari (general administration), the amil or amil guzar of a sarkar was mainly concerned with the revenue administration to complete his annual collection target to become a krori (one who realises the taxes to the tune of a hundred million rupees for the treasury) for which, of course, he could, if necessary, determine the direction of the forces under the foudar.

The English East India Company nick named as the John company, which heralded a new imperial era, in the light of its experience with territorial consolidation, favoured centralisation of authority in the district. In Bengal the head of the district designated as supervisor, was first appointed in 1769 but in 1772 he was made collector investing him with revenue, judicial and executive powers. In Madras, on the other hand, a board of revenue was constituted in 1786 as the supervising and controlling agency of the entire revenue administration and the collector was made the head of the district in 1787 to be the intermediary between the government and the people of his district.



The reorganisation of district administration began in Bombay with the fall of the Marathas in 1817-18 and Mountstuart Elphinstone, the British resident in Poona taking over as commissioner of practically the entire region of Deccan. He was a votary of centralisation like Sir John Shore and Holt Mackenzie and a champion of the Madras model district administration built by Col. Alexander Reid and Col. Thomas Munro.

His natural preference for the district therefore was the institution of the collector with centralisation of powers in him. The other British provinces and the progressive native states in India like Travancore and Mysore invariably borrowed the district model established in the three presidencies but of course some of them could not ignore the changes necessitated by administrative compulsions and social realities.

#### *Regulation and Non-regulation Provinces*

Broadly, in the beginning, the British divided their provinces into regulation provinces and non-regulation provinces. By an act of 1773 as amended by an act of 1787, Parliament conferred upon the governor-general and his council in Fort William, the powers to issue ordinances, rules and regulations for the functioning of a good government in India. By acts of 1797, 1800 and 1807 Parliament had given similar powers to the government of Madras and of Bombay for the same objective.

On the contrary, the non-regulation provinces had no authority to enact laws which were made for them by the Government of India.

In every non-regulation province, a single officer called chief commissioner was appointed at the top abolishing the board of administration if it was already in existence. The act of 1854 empowered the governor-general-in-council with the approval of the board of control in London to bring any province of British India directly under his control. The head of such a province is found mentioned in the Indian Council Act of 1870 as chief commissioner.

The regulations in general were governmental enactments that formed a body of public laws including procedure

and were introduced in those provinces which had political tranquillity or where people on the whole, were amenable to governmental authority and social conditions were relatively stable for the maintenance of peace and harmony between the various sections of the people. The matters of land ownership and revenue realisation were generally smooth. In the legitimacy thus obtained, the regulation provinces had brought into force the rule of law<sup>\*</sup> with strict adherence to clearly defined procedure both in administrative actions and judicial process.

In meeting the fluid socio-political situations, administrative decisions had to be taken often ad hoc or at times even arbitrarily or expediently and it was not always possible to go by the discipline and safeguards laid down by procedure. The district of the non-regulation provinces, therefore, was put not under a collector but a deputy commissioner who was given wide discretionary powers to take decisions depending upon time, place and situation. The uncertainties and flux existing as well as anticipated by the government in the non-regulation provinces had impelled it to give greater emphasis on the role of the deputy commissioner as a district level coordinator in order that the unity of the administration could be achieved under his overall leadership.

With the permanent settlement made by Lord Cornwallis in 1793, the territorial units below the sub-division became superfluous or redundant in the Bengal presidency and the responsibility of the revenue administration on the part of the collector was highlighted only in terms of his magisterial powers in realising the revenue from the zamindars and for the purposes of law and order. More importance therefore was given in the Bengal presidency consisting of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Banaras to the magisterial functions of the collector who was therefore more known as district magistrate.

#### *Commissionership*

By the regulation of 1829 Lord William Bentinck appointed commissioner for the division comprising four to five districts to be the immediate line superior of the district officer whether collector, district magistrate or deputy commissioner, but he could not do so in the presidency of Madras where the board

of revenue and the government were united in defending the collector's position and status. As a result, even now the states that follow the Madras pattern of administration as Kerala and Andhra Pradesh do not subscribe to the idea of superimposing a commissioner over the collector.

The state of Maharashtra, the successor to the erstwhile presidency of Bombay, which has borrowed the territorial administration of Madras straight from the days of Mountstuart Elphinstone, although abolished the post of commissioner in 1958 on justifiable grounds, for reasons which are still unconvincing reinstituted it in 1963. After a spell of approximately 25 years, in February 1987, Rajasthan, however, as Maharashtra, grouped its districts into six divisions against its earlier five and revived the office of the commissioner. The presence of a commissioner may have certain advantages but it does not help the collector to develop a frame of mind essential for self-confidence, initiative and independent decision-making. It brings upon him a constant pressure of tutelage which results in diminution of his personality where it is to be projected in full for such functions as coordination. Neither does the propensity of the commissioner to play at times the role of the collector nor does the collector's predisposition to be obediently loyal to the commissioner, add to the efficiency or serve the organisational objectives of the district administration.

The states which fastidiously hold on to the post of commissioner, have not achieved any distinction either in terms of administrative performance or popular satisfaction arising out of public services rendered, over the states which have not yielded to its creation. However, the board of revenue which was the vanguard of the collectorate type of administration in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, is no more in existence and its place has been taken over by commissioners at the state level entrusted with specific portfolios. The commissioner of land revenue has superintendary jurisdiction over the district revenue administration which he exercises as judiciously as the board of revenue in the past.

In the presidency of Madras, the board of revenue was created to be the supervisory and controlling agency of the entire revenue administration in 1786 but in Kerala it was brought

into being only with the formation of the state in November 1956. The requisite regulations for the constitution and direction of the board were made in 1791 but they were executive in character. In 1803 a set of statutory rules entitled the "Madras Board of Revenue Regulation I", was enacted and thereby the board became an autonomous body, collective in responsibility and exercising control over the collectors of the districts. Since then the board of revenue has passed through an eventful history overcoming several moves for its abolition over a period of 150 years between 1830 and 1980 from such sources as the board of control, the government of India and the state ministry. During this period the board has undergone several changes significant to its size, powers and functions. As the temper of the state Government varied with the installation of men in authority who do not respect corporate deliberations in governmental affairs, the life of the board was finally brought to an end on December 1, 1980.

The only state which has Tamil Nadu model of board of revenue now is Kerala but its status is increasingly eroded both by the secretariat and the political executive and its advice is accepted, if it coincides with the views of the government. In many other states the board of revenue whether its membership is single or plural, is exclusively a revenue appellate tribunal to dispose of appeals from the decisions of the collector or commissioner, a function which was performed by the board of revenue in Tamil Nadu and is still with its surviving counterpart in Kerala. The revenue board in states like Madhya Pradesh has superintendary jurisdiction in matters of revenue and may exercise in such matters, the power of inspection over the collectorate. However in practice, the power of inspection has been in prolonged disuse and therefore, its actual efficacy will be determined by the situation in which it is invoked by the board. It is a pertinent point that the board of revenue when it thrived in Tamil Nadu as a pillar of strength to the collector in the affairs of revenue, had no powers in matters of law and order for which the collector was directly answerable to the government.

While the administrative culture of the regulation provinces has become the common administrative culture of the country, a variation of the non-regulation provinces that

still retains its identity, is the office of the deputy commissioner which even after the disappearance of the difference between the two types of provinces and achievement of national independence, continues with the same designation in Haryana, Punjab, Assam and parts of Bihar.

In the princely state of Mysore which was under the overall control of the resident commissioner, the revenue commissioner was higher in the hierarchy than the chief secretary of the state. With the formation of Karnataka and creation of its four commissioner's divisions, the designation deputy commissioner for the district officer has been a political choice mainly because of its sonorous appeal.

### *Combination of Powers*

From the days of the Mauryas there was concentration as well as combination of powers in the district officer. During the early years of the British rule, Lord Cornwallis had severed the native judicial machinery attached to the office of the collector and integrated it with the court of district judge. There were strong proponents of centralization like Sir John Shore, Holt Mackenzie, Thomas Munro and Lord William Bentinck who finally restored to the collector his judicial powers without prejudice to the jurisdiction of the district judge.

For guaranteeing the citizen's fundamental rights, separation of the judiciary from the executive became a national objective after independence and this most significant reform was carried out nolens volens in states like Bihar only as late as the seventies. As the collector has been all along the recipient of more and more authority and in practice the repository of the residuary powers in the district, the taking away of the judicial power from him has become a standing bureaucratic grievance which in fact had served to deftly conceal the enormous powers that were united in him in the context of the national policy of development.

While the traditionalists in Indian administration still call for the restoration of judicial powers to the collector, they generally ignore or minimise the importance of enormous authority vested in him for developmental activities because for them power to regulate the ways of society is more real and

prestigious than the power to bring about socio-economic progress. The collector or deputy commissioner after the bifurcation of the judiciary from the executive, is made executive district magistrate for the maintenance of public peace and tranquillity.

In every civilized country, irrespective of the character of the government, district level administration has been by and large a local democracy, but the British for reasons obvious, opted to retain the centralized local government in the districts of their imperial territories with necessary adaptations or modifications. They found a centralised local government or a localised central government in conformity with the traditional psyche of Indian society, was extremely useful for consolidating their governmental authority in conformity with the unity of command and the doctrine of unity.

#### *Government Agent in Sri Lanka*

In Ceylon (Sri Lanka) also the district officer was known as collector until 1800 but he was made the agent of the government in 1878. He was the repository of judicial, administrative and executive powers and was also concurrently the district judge till 1930.

There is, of course, no officer in any other country who has been invested with so much of powers as the collector of an Indian district and there is no democracy in any part of the world where a career civil servant absolutely unrepresentative of the people, is appointed to be their social and administrative leader. What is more formidable to democracy and the constitutional structure of the country, is that he may fast become an agent of the Centre particularly on account of his service affiliation as has already been the governor who was originally intended to be only the constitutional head of a state. In France the office of the prefect is abolished in 1982 and his authority transferred to the general council popularly elected and in Ceylon the government agent has been made subordinate to a duality, the district political authority who is a member of Parliament and the chairman of the district development council (DDC) who is elected by the elected members of the DDC.

The changes that are brought about diffidently in the district administration in this country, have been peripheral, half-hearted or hardly progressive and even in matters of appointment of a collector, the government has chained itself from considering a person outside the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). The relations between the district administration and the IAS are made mysterious beyond the comprehension of the students of administration and the political leadership has made little endeavour to unravel their real nature. It appears the new elitism emerging in politics has found a new elation in its association with a sample aristocracy built up by the superior bureaucracy. There has not yet been created a theory or model for reorganising the district administration on democratic foundation that will lend viability and vitality to the superstructure of the representative system at the state and central levels. The resistance to intellectual association with Indian administration is no where so clearly demonstrated as in the continued absence of a theory that conceives a democratic alternative for the over-centralised set-up in the district.

#### *Collector and Development*

The difference between the collector and district magistrate or deputy commissioner, of course, is of mere historic interest now, and they are one and the same office with powers and participative role in the sphere of development varying from state to state. In Tamil Nadu and till recently in Karnataka, he has been *ex officio* chairman of the DDC or district development board, a statutory advisory body of mixed composition. After the creation of the zila parishad based on a full-fledged party system in 1961-62 the collector's role in development was considerably reduced in Maharashtra, but the present trend is to restore some developmental functions back to him as manifested by district planning, and state sector project implementation.

The chairman of the zila parishad in Uttar Pradesh is the collector who normally does not convene its formal meetings but meet its members in different developmental contexts and committees where matters pertaining to the parishad are informally finalised for its formal approval later.

In Gujarat he is an associate member of the zila parishad but he is free from the responsibilities of development which are borne by the district development officer who is a member of the IAS often senior to the collector as the chief executive officer of the zila parishad in Maharashtra. The collector in Andhra Pradesh was chairman of all standing committees of the zila parishad and the authority inflicting minor punishments on the subordinate staff. In West Bengal the district magistrate has a separate development branch under the immediate control of an additional district magistrate and in Assam, the district development officer is the deputy commissioner who is also a member of the mahkuma parishad functioning at the sub-divisional level. The collector is a member of the zila parishad without right to vote in Rajasthan.

In Bihar where there was no revenue machinery as in West Bengal below the sub-division before independence, each development block has concurrently been made a revenue anchal corresponding to a tahsil or a taluk in other states. The block committee known as prakhand samiti, is in control of the block development officer, (BDO). The collector is a member of the zila parishad the executive officer of which is deputy district development commissioner, a junior to the collector but directly working under the divisional commissioner who is answerable to the state government for all developmental activities.

Under the Karnataka Zila Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samitis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats Act 1983, the zila parishad has been made a fully elected body, in charge of development in the district. The district panchayat in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, the counterpart of the zila parishad in other states, is a body independent of the collector but its secretary in Madhya Pradesh is relatively a junior officer belonging to the state class I services. As far as development is concerned, the district panchayat in Madhya Pradesh appears to be tame and it is largely managed by the district level departmental officers under the broad directions of the divisional commissioner. In Gujarat, on the contrary, the district panchayat with its chief executive, the district development officer has comprehensive control over the process of development as the zila parishad in Maharashtra.



In the function of coordination, the collector can rely on a statutory body like the DDC only in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The DDC is only an advisory body but its statutory nature enables the collector to secure the presence of all district level departmental officers in its meetings and use it as an instrument for coordination.

The chairmanship of the DDC has virtually combined in the collector in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, two types of leadership, namely, the bureaucratic and democratic for such a foremost objective as the economic and social well-being of the people of his district. With the collector assuming the burden of development, the volume of his work has become unprecedentedly heavy and in according him the needed relief and finding him the required time for his new responsibility, the Tamil Nadu government in 1960 created a new post, the district revenue officer (DRO) to whom was transferred the bulk of the revenue functions of the collector. The responsibilities similar to those of the DRO are entrusted to a special deputy commissioner in Karnataka.

When the collectorship was instituted in British territories, the government of a presidency had only two departments. But today owing to a variety of reasons, the government has grown into a complex organisation of numerous departments and agencies. Consequently, the number of district level departmental officers augmented considerably, weaving round the collector an intricate web of inter-relationships that enhances his prominence to be the leader of the administrative fraternity of his district. Even though multiplication of officials has in a way maximised the position of the collector, in the socio-political atmosphere brought about by the adoption of a full-fledged democracy, its significance to the people seems to be limited.

The complaint from the source of career civil service that the collector does not have any more the authority or aura of yesteryears arises mainly because the bureaucrat still nurtures and fondles the image of a district head of the imperial days which is no way relevant to a democratic administration. In fact, it should go into the mind of the civil servant that the willingness on the part of the people of this country to submit themselves to a highly centralised district

government under a bureaucratic leadership is unparalleled in the annals of any other country. Even in a land of military dictatorship like Thailand, the district (*amphoe*) is a local democracy. But in India, politicians and bureaucrats for reasons of their own, have formed into a strange partnership to deny to the super-structure of Indian democracy its edifying and stabilising sub-structure.

### *Local of Collector*

The place of the collector which is important to the function of district level coordination can now be determined:

- (i) the formation of territorial unit of a quasi-state or sub-state character termed district with a single executive at the top is yet a sound principle which ensures the doctrine of unity and facilitates unity of command;
- (ii) in the broad trisection of the administrative pyramid, the collector is given the pivotal position with more powers, freedom and importance than any other comparable manager which brings in the advantages of efficient communication, better personnel control, quick decision-making and prompt execution;
- (iii) while the number of districts is now almost doubled since 1926, the district is still a principal territorial unit of administration and its varying size has not affected the structure of its administration. The divisional commissioner as a supervening authority may, however, goad or guide the collector but the local finality in matters of social, political and economic life of the people still largely is to be sought at the district level;
- (iv) the absence of the post of commissioner which is wasteful and superfluous in states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala, enables the collector to maintain his image and authority unimpaired;
- (v) the collector has invariably been the representative of the government in the district. It has reposed in him great trust and confidence as a valuable liaison

between itself and the people. Although the board of revenue is now abolished in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, its collective superintendence over him in the past was a convincing ground for the exclusion of the commissioner from the hierarchy as superior to the collector and the role it played as a veritable defender of his position, prestige and influence, has still its effect manifested in the attitude of the higher levels of administration towards him. It is because of the ways by which the board of revenue conducted itself in its relations with the collector, he still continues to enjoy a status higher than that of an average deputy commissioner in any other state;

- (vi) as in social life and politics, traditionalism in administration too is a powerful force that resists change and maintains the continuing order undisturbed. Upon the logic of yesterday, it builds up justification for today. It insists that what was presented to be a palliative for yesterday must be a panacea for today and what was venerable the other day must be worshipped today. It seeks to project the image of the past to be the unfailing god and exact obedience and loyalty to that being partly by ornate devices of social acceptance and partly through the pressures of its immortal authority. And there is around the collector in contrast to the district level departmental officers, an aura of awesome traditionalism which has a great amount of force and appeal in the official and popular spheres in the district. The collector is the sole repository of the residuary authority or the authority not distributed to other departmental officers and in the matters vital to their operations, they are dependent upon him;
- (vii) the social predisposition strengthened by disillusionising trends in politics in the country, are conducive to the collector's continuing as the central authority in the district administrative set-up;
- (viii) in states where the collector has direct responsibility for or specific role to play in development, he is brought in dynamic relationship with the people; and

- (ix) in areas of his conventional responsibilities, such as, revenue and office management, the collector has been given the assistance of officers of the rank of additional collector or deputy collector so that enough time will be available to him to apply his mind sagaciously to managerial problems.

### *Focus of Coordination*

It is the pivotal local of the collector in the district administration that projects him as the principal coordinator and enables him to perform the task of coordination.

Coordination is the dynamic art of bringing together the constituents of an organisation in harmonious and active interrelationship so that each in its turn would perform its assigned functions within the allotted time towards obtaining the anticipated total results of the whole. It pre-supposes that organisational structure is in sound condition, the division of functions is scientific and the man behind each job is competent enough.

As coordination involves the task of applying personnel to their assigned functions in an organisational situation for achieving the objectives in view, the question of span of control is of special significance to it. In a sense, it is a concerted effort to bring about organic cohesion for operational unity aimed at efficient performance and as such, it demands a high degree of intellectual power and constructive insights to discern and correct the unproductive behavioural trends and resolve the various types of conflicts prevailing within the organisation.

Managerial skills of rare quality are necessary to bring together and motivate individuals of divergent temperaments, attitudes and opinions. Coordinative effort is imperative not for the evolution of policy alone but also for transmitting, explaining and executing it. Creative intention in the formulation of policy and creative response to its implementation are of critical importance to successful coordination. The inter-dependent functional groups in the organisation should be effectively linked by an efficient communication system to be informed and inspired by an enlightened leadership to achieve

the organisational goals. Thus in a way, the essence of coordination is to be sought in the efficacy of a communication system properly exploited by an intelligent leadership capable of infusing the spirit of partnership.

Every member of the organization should have a complete knowledge of its objectives and should be well provided to contribute in full measure to their realisation. Once his perquisites and privileges are met to his fullest contentment, the bureaucrat tends to develop a callous indifference to the denial of minimum working conditions to his subordinates which is absolutely dangerous to the psyche of team work, a *sine qua non* for coordination.

Dissension and hidden hostility in the organisation are invariably due to the denial of justice often engineered with the connivance of a complacent leadership. The function of supervision particularly at the lower levels has to be performed vigorously and the organizational climate should be conducive to self-discipline which is a foremost requirement of voluntary cooperation.

It is well-known that specialists and experts are often disinclined to accept line authority unless it is exercised with utmost caution in an atmosphere of respect for knowledge. The task of the coordinator will become enormously difficult in an organisation employing a large number of specialists, if he fails to develop healthy informal organization and takes to authoritarian logic and archaic criteria of arrogant self-esteem. Clear demarcation of the lines and levels of responsibility, correct assessment of the knowledge and abilities of personnel in relation to the tasks assigned, proper dissemination of information of functions and methods of their performance, promotion of collective thinking through productive discussion will smoothen the ground for orderly coordination.

A wide range of tools such as orders, instructions, directives, systems of suggestion, manuals, charts, informative materials like hand-outs and bulletins, meetings, conferences, staff agencies and formal and informal group discussions, is available for accomplishing the task of coordination and it is for the coordinator to choose the best suitable for his work and find out or forge new ones to meet any deficiency which he has observed. The power on which the coordinator should

rely, in the normal course, should be not the power of his organisation but of organizing, not of his position but of persuasion, not of his reaction, but of reconciliation. He must not dictate but be prepared to hear, understand, argue and convince.

### *Phases of Coordination*

The fronts of activities where the work of coordination is to be done normally by the collector in the district administration, are the district headquarters, the field of revenue and the province of law and order. However, in some states particularly in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the collector undertakes the task of coordination in the field of development which is indeed most delicate and burdensome, for here he himself has to lead and direct the district level departmental officers.

The political executive and administrative heads of the Centre as also of the states, independently contact the collector for numerous things the nature of which can at best be speculated. New functional burden for the old organizational structure is a chronic ailment of the district administration of the country which no state has endeavoured to cure so far in full. The progressive reform conceived in terms of democratic decentralisation has been half-heartedly carried out that in no states except perhaps in Maharashtra, it has secured a viable base for its active operations to make at least some of its objectives meaningful to the people. The nexus between power-hungry politicians and pleasure-seeking bureaucrats has sanctioned a holiday for its prolonged hibernation.

A painful paradox of Indian administration is that the present generation of bureaucrats, mostly brought up in the freedom brought in by the institutions of democracy, has neither faith in local self-government nor respect for civil liberties. In Haryana the bureaucrats had cleverly capitalised on the covert antagonism of the politicians against the zila parishad to the extent of its abolition in 1973. Since then the function of development is transferred to the additional deputy commissioner in immediate charge of the development branch in the office of the deputy commissioner.

The entire process of democratic decentralization in India is sub-normal, dormant and ambivalent. Even in Tamil Nadu,

the modification carried out to the structure of local democracy by supplanting the time honoured Riponian district board, a successful experiment in decentralization, with the DDC has neither satisfied the demands of an ideal, organizational pattern nor contributed to the devolution of authority in the requisite measure, or to the means of realizing accountability. The DDC is an advisory body but its utility as an instrument of coordination largely depends upon the diligence and resourcefulness of the collector.

As in Haryana, the zila parishad in Orissa too is abolished and its place is taken over by a district development board under the chairmanship of the collector. The district planning board in Jammu and Kashmir and the district development committee in Himachal Pradesh are created exclusively to manage the developmental affairs. The presence of cabinet ministers on the district planning board in Jammu and Kashmir adds to the authority of the collector partly for his task of coordination. In development either the collector is directly involved as in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Haryana, Assam and Orissa or partly as in states like West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (UP) or notionally as in Maharashtra and Gujarat.

#### *District Headquarters*

In most districts before 1940 the collector had all alone applied himself to the job of coordination of the revenue administration for which he had no assistant of gazetted rank to share the burden with him. In fact, the purpose or advantage of this gazetted ordination still remains partially obscure, and the concept yet fostered in Indian administration that only officers can shoulder responsibilities needs to be re-examined especially in the light of the instructive experience of two departments, namely, the posts and telegraphs and the railways.

The first gazetted assistant was given to the collector during the peak years of World War II, but he was designated differently in different provinces. In Tamil Nadu he is under-designated as personal assistant, but in Maharashtra, he is resident deputy collector. In other states, the manager of the collectorate is an officer of no less than the rank of a deputy collector. On the revenue side, the collector has the assistance

of one or more additional district magistrate or additional collector. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala in view of the direct involvement of the collector in development, the entire revenue matters are independently managed by the DRO.

Although the collector has only limited responsibilities with regard to development in Andhra Pradesh, the revenue functions of the district are under the direct control of the DRO who was already in existence in those districts transferred from the composite state of Madras for the creation of the Andhra state. However, in many states as in West Bengal and Assam, the general administration of the district office is under an additional district magistrate or additional deputy commissioner, assisted by a fixed number of deputy collectors or assistant commissioners. In Assam he is called the sadar subdivisional officer.

The district office or the collectorate or the headquarters of the deputy commissioner is indeed a beehive of activities representing almost the entire functions of the government. Every conceivable business is transacted in the collectorate and it is from here, control is exercised over a number of field officers including the revenue divisional officer or subdivisional officer.

In West Bengal, the district magistrate's central office is divided into a number of branches and each branch is normally headed by an additional district magistrate. In Tamil Nadu, however, the DRO as an independent functionary in revenue matters, has control over the personal assistant (general), especially in the absence of the collector. The main branches of the collectorate in Tamil Nadu are revenue, survey, civil supplies, general and development. A collectorate in Maharashtra on an average has 10 to 15 branches. Each main branch of the collectorate is headed by either an officer of the rank of deputy collector or additional collector and from there the line of authority runs to the field. There is no fixed strength of personnel for a collectorate, and depending upon the number of sections or departments, it may vary from 300 to 800 or even more.

Each branch of the collectorate is further divided into departments as in West Bengal or sections as in Tamil Nadu



and Maharashtra. The success of coordination of the district administration largely depends upon the quality of the organisation of the collectorate and the efficacy of its communication.

Most district offices have archaic administrative structure conforming more or less to the conventional organisational theory but over the years, it has grown and expanded under the pressures of necessity without undergoing any process of rationalisation. Some of the collectorates are in a chaotic state and the confusion prevailing in the headquarters often has its consequences in the field offices. One of the prime requisites of the district level coordination is that the disorderly and aging collectorate should be reorganised on systemic basis in order that it may equip for its own orderly coordination as well as of the entire district administration.

A programme of coordination of the district administration should at first be implemented in the central office as it is the control room of field operations, the vital junction of communications, and the seat of leadership and authority of the district. A well coordinated and efficiently run central office is the public guarantee that the district administration is alive and active to achieve its objectives.

Horizontal or intersectional coordination at the base is the first task which can successfully be performed provided the social climate and administrative culture encourage mutual assistance and cooperation between the first line supervisors. Positive responses between equal functionaries of the same level, automatically provide a wholesome atmosphere for coordinative efforts. In Tamil Nadu the personal assistants of the collector have no field duties and they with the assistance of their sectional heads, within their respective spheres of responsibility, coordinate the functions of the central office.

The management of the office of the collector is indeed a strenuous as also a complex task and it demands not only organisational skills but also profound knowledge of public relations. In states where the office management of the collector is immediately under an officer of the status of deputy collector, intersectional coordination is the responsibility of an additional collector but where the branches are headed by

additional district magistrates as in West Bengal, the collector has to make special effort for their coordinated operations.

Although in the normal course, the collector may entrust the function of coordination of the central office to the officer immediately below him, in view of its importance he has to exercise overall personal supervision for its orderly and integrated functioning. Due to multifarious responsibilities including frequent official tours, it may not be possible for the collector to review periodically the working of all branches and sections of his headquarters, and he has to rely on effective delegation in order to keep them moving in concert. There are statutory and non-statutory methods of delegation and in Tamil Nadu, the Madras Collectors' Delegation of Powers Act 1956 empowers the state government to delegate any statutory function of the collector to one of his personal assistants.

The administration in general has become increasingly costly mainly because of the changing character of politics and rising ambitions of bureaucracy, and the district administration will be not without its justification for an alternate entirely devoted to the function of coordination and to assume full charge of the collectorate especially when the collector will be away from the district capital.

Modern techniques and ideas of coordination cannot easily be put to work in the district office built on the now-outmoded design made almost two centuries ago for an autocratic pattern of administration that suited to a feudal order, unless substantial structural modifications are carried out to it. Neither the politician nor the bureaucrat in the continuing game of power, has the imagination for its modernisation on democratic lines or the will to introduce changes that make a dynamic impact on the environment of social progress.

Restructuring the collectorate facilitating clear demarcation of the spheres of functions and levels of authority and the unfaltering and active operation of an up-to-date communication system capable of forging organisational cohesion, may provide the necessary settings for coordination. Intersectional cooperation can be achieved more by sectional autonomy that enables in practice decentralised decision making as far as public needs are concerned. A master manager in the office

of the collector until it ceases to continue as the centre of the existing type of district administration, is an imperative requirement which remains to be fulfilled. Intersectional relations and departmental interlinking should be so organic that the performance of the function of coordination should be a matter of automatic response.

### *Field of Revenue*

In the first instance, district administration is revenue administration, the primary task of which is to determine the relations between the land and the people and realise the revenue from the land for the viability of the state system and the legitimacy and stability of the government. The district administration in India does not undertake the management of land but assumes the responsibility for its administration. It maintains accounts for all types of land and their transfers and classifies the land in private custody with a view to assess the revenue due from it. In all land acquisition, and land alienation and transfers, the revenue administration has a fundamental or prominent role to play. It is the principal authority in the determination of ownership and possession of land and more so, for the execution of decrees passed in this regard by courts of civil jurisdiction. It has statutory powers to settle the interminable boundary disputes and also evict every encroachment.

In a predominantly agrarian country like India, the district administration is the actual government in action for the overwhelming majority of the people. The mainstay of Indian life is the village and it is in the village, the country's superstition, ignorance, oppressive traditions and above all, the caste system are deeply rooted. The characteristics of caste which make it a localised social group, are more pronounced and its feuds are more intense in the village. The connection between the land and caste is nowhere so ostensible and observable as in the village. The bitter boundary disputes arising from the possession of land and the every day encroachments which quite often lead to major law and order problems, are largely provoked by caste affinities and loyalties. The power of a caste is determined by the extent of possession of land by its

members and the dominance or dependency of a social group inhabiting a village is indicated by the nature of their attachment to the land

A revenue village which is normally a group of ordinary hamlets, is the basic unit of a revenue administration and it has mainly two functionaries in almost every state for maintaining the revenue accounts, collection of land tax and cesses and its general administration or headship. However states like Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Punjab and UP, the village headman known as *lumbardar* (numberdar), has practically been relegated to the background or abolished, and in Kerala and Karnataka the old village revenue head has been redesignated as village officer and given the assistance of an accountant. The *patwari* is the revenue officer in the village normally in all Hindi speaking states except perhaps, in Bihar where he is given the Sanskrit title *rajaswakarmachari*. Be that as it may, the village officer is the key figure in the field co-ordination, and in Assam known by the name *mouzdar*, he can in practice with the social power at his disposal, exert considerable influence upon the district administration.

The line of authority runs from the collector to the revenue divisional or sub-divisional officer and from him to the *tahsildar* in charge of a *taluk* or *tahsil*. Except in Bihar, West Bengal and Assam, a revenue circle which is a cluster of revenue villages interposes between the *taluk* and the village. It is known as *girdawar circle* in Jammu and Kashmir or *kanungo circle* in Haryana or the *firka* of a revenue inspector in Tamil Nadu. In Bihar the *anchal* which is a block, and in Assam and West Bengal the revenue circle roughly correspond to a *taluk* or *tahsil* in other states.

Although in coordinating the field administration, vertical coordination is the rule and horizontal, the exception, the heads of revenue circles can achieve a measure of inter-circle coordination provided they have established a mutual understanding in furtherance of their organisational objectives. Land has always been a major cause of conflict between individuals, groups and nations, and in a predominantly agricultural country like in India, it has not only been the prime source of wealth and determinant of social power but also the main motivation behind the recurring blood feuds in the

village, and the endless litigation in which often the hands of the lumberdar and the patwari are subtly hidden.

The equivalents of the lumberdar and the patwari, in Andhra Pradesh are the karnam and the village munsif in the old Andhra or the mali patil and the police patil in the Telengana region. They could exert such a powerful influence on the village that the Telugu Desam government has abolished the posts as well as their territorial units. Except perhaps in Kerala, they constitute a virtual terror to the average villager and to some extent obstruct the modernisation and democratisation of the village administration.

In all its essential features the revenue administration in India is village administration and effective control over the village revenue functionaries, is vital to the function of district level coordination.

The tahsildar in charge of a taluk or tahsil is the immediate coordinator of the administrative activities of the villages in his jurisdiction but in large parts of India, neither by knowledge nor by training he is equipped to perform the task, and his traditional methods are outdated to achieve the expected results. In states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, he is invested with the powers of a second class executive magistrate but he hardly has an occasion to exercise them due to the overwhelming prevalence of the supervening authorities.

The art of coordination at the district level gathers its components by and large from the coordination of the taluk administration. Although tradition bound and still feudal in approach to the common man, the tahsildar is the hub of coordination of the taluk administration. Nevertheless, the tahsildar is not normally equipped with modern management knowledge nor his initiative is adequate to welcome innovations in the taluk office.

The territorial unit between the taluk and the district is the sub-division or revenue division as it is called in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It often consists of a few tahsils or taluks and is under a sub-divisional officer or revenue divisional officer who is invariably a deputy collector or an assistant commissioner. In a few states like UP, a sub-division for exceptional reasons corresponds to or co-extensive with a

tahsil. The firka, revenue circle or girdawar or kanungo circle like the canton in France has little administrative importance to the people but its head, the revenue inspector can be a strong link in the vertical coordination. However the case of a sub-divisional officer is different, provided the taluk is given due importance, and at least in one state Tamil Nadu, the Varghese Commission in 1973 recommended that the revenue division should be abolished and the sub-collector should be moved to the taluk office considering the huge volume of public transactions it handles every day.

Effective district level coordination does not require an intricate hierarchy of officials arranged one above the other in close proximity but a specific allocation of functions to the personnel placed in appropriate inter-relationships and clear fixation of responsibility. A rational reorganisation of the territorial administration which is a long overdue reform if carried out, the revenue units like the sub-division will automatically become superfluous and several positions at various levels, redundant. The sub-divisional officer as long as he heads a revenue division or sub-division should inspire and motivate the tahsildars to play their part with imagination and zeal in the fulfilment of the task of coordination.

Coordination is a function that calls for participative spirit and the inequality that leads to invidious distinction among equals on the basis of their services is a major source of concealed resentment and hostility, besides being a disincentive that adversely affects the working morale and efficiency. The justification for designating a state service officer holding charge of a sub-division as revenue divisional or sub-divisional officer or deputy collector and an officer of the IAS having the similar charge, as sub-collector can hardly be found except in terms of the vanity of the higher bureaucracy.

In Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh the DRO has independent control over the statutory matters pertaining to the revenue administration and from his decisions appeals lie only to the commissioner, land revenue. Coordination of the revenue administration cannot singly be done by the DRO in the existing duality of control over the staff and the division of their loyalty. The DRO is normally from the state service, and there is a tendency on the part of the

sub-collectors belonging to the IAS to be extremely formal in their relations with him.

Both sub-collectors and revenue divisional officers are under the administrative control of the collector as well as the DRO and the personal assistants of the branches are common to both. They have more or less equal magisterial powers, powers of inspection and for annual assessment of revenue or *jamabandi*. Successful coordination in the field of revenue is, therefore, a matter of understanding between the collector and the DRO and their ability to pull together for single minded action. This fact holds good for all states where the collector or the district magistrate has an additional collector or additional district magistrate as his immediate subordinate in the revenue ladder. If their formal relations are forged in professional ethics, and informal relations intimate, the collector can entrust the task of coordination of revenue administration to the additional collector or additional deputy commissioner as the case may be, extending such support and advice to him as may be necessary from time to time for its accomplishment.

For the revenue administration in almost every state, there are such instruments as village accounts manual and settlement manual which are supplemented periodically by standing orders and instructions issued by the government or the board of revenue where it has still superintendary jurisdiction. The collector is free to issue in conformity with these manuals and supplementaries his own orders for the efficient management of revenue affairs in his district and more so, for their coordinated management.

### *Law and Order*

A heavy responsibility which the collector has been shouldering through the vicissitudes of the district life is of law and order. The problem of public peace and tranquillity is enormous and complex in a democracy as the people as a matter of right, resort to agitational means to force those in authority to be responsive to their demands.

With the eclipse of the liberals who believed in the rule of law and constitutionalism, Indian politics has taken a course

of defiance of law as a means to achieve political independence in spite of the sober counsel from the most sympathetic quarters that self-government was only a matter of time but for acquiring the art of its management, persistent preparation to create a climate of self-discipline, self-restraint, patience and respect for values was an essential pre-condition.

In a fragmented society of endless contradictions, deliberate infractions of law has led to the moulding of a political culture the two major components of which are mass violence and widespread destruction of both public and private property. In independent India no effort was made to purge these two abhorrent features of the political culture but on the other hand, the new political elite, the roughcast of an insensitive feudal society, to serve its own ambitions added to it, two more vicious elements, criminalisation of politics and politicisation of criminals. Political responses today cannot be evoked by peaceful methods but to the acute distress and miseries of the common man, only by organised violence.

In a society where oppression is inbuilt, recrudescence of violence politically fomented has virtually robbed the poor masses of their faith in the administration of justice. It is an irony of Indian democracy that the bureaucrats concerned with the maintenance of law and order themselves have developed a cantankerous and cynical attitude towards collective protest irrespective of its legitimacy and not seldom resorted to counter-violence to suppress it.

More than inflammable political issues, police atrocities in terms of implication of honest men in concocted crimes, death of suspects in custody, rape of helpless women, torture of innocents and elimination of conscientious political activists in fake encounters rouse the people to express their collective resentment which only tickles the authorities to resort to repressive measures. Once in power, the politician who has bitterest experience of police brutalities, himself has little courage to bring forward any reform to effect a radical change in the police behaviour towards the public but he does not fail to seek subterfuge for his inability to control the police in the obsolete and obnoxious argument that compelling the force to conform to the law may flag its morale.



Indian democracy could not change the character of the police primarily because the rule of law remains an inconceivable concept for the dominant social groups from which emerges the power of the police. As the police violates the law, paradoxically there is a tendency on the part of the politician in power to extend to it the cover of impunity. Political prudence and preparation have been hardly adequate to evolve a system to regulate or rationalise the rapidly expanding police organisation which goes by an inflexible logic of its own cast through several agonising centuries.

Oriental despots and imperialists who established their sway over the country, efficaciously exploited the sadism of the police to exercise ruthless control over the masses, but the British who had profound knowledge of both society and its traditional instruments of control for the first time, provided the legal and institutional base for the police to function as public servants. However quite often supervision at the cutting edge level was nominal or notional and as a result, at the grassroots the image of police ever remained monstrous. Neither by training nor by treatment, the policeman has developed a temperament conducive for sustained investigation of crimes and the interrogation of the suspect has invariably become a euphemism for pitiless use of outrageous third degree methods. In his search for deriving sadistic pleasure, the Indian police man has sacrificed his potentials for intellectual quest essential for the discovery of facts that promises the credibility of the people in the administration of justice.

In India unlike in the United Kingdom, the citizen has no redress against the arbitrary exercise of police power. Every police man in the United Kingdom is responsible to the courts for any wrongful act and is amenable to regulations that essentially bring about an equilibrium between liberty and order. On the contrary, in India the police in general seek unfettered authority against the citizen and absolute safety against the consequences arising from its deliberate misuse. In the United Kingdom, the police rely on their prestige rather than their power, and therefore, can count on public support for maintaining the social fabric clean. The police man in India is the repository of the

distrust of the people for whom he is still a symbol of feudal tyranny.

The police in the country is a heavily centralised hierarchy which does not give scope for very much upward mobility. During the British period the entire police force of a province was under the control of the home department and in the district it functioned completely subordinate to the magisterial authority of the collector. Of late, the police organisation has expanded enormously and the inspector general of police who was at its apex, has been pushed a step down and his place is taken over by a new chief designated as director general of police. As the post of director is conspicuous by its absence in the police hierarchy, the appropriateness of the designation appears to be problematic.

Pressures for opening more promotional avenues have led to the multiplication of inspectors-general, deputy inspectors-general and superintendents of police in every state quite disproportionate to the requirements of the department. While it has fully redeemed the senior police officers from a possible stagnation and consequent frustration, it has invariably tended to make the police organisation top heavy. To abate or neutralise the adverse effect of the top heaviness a process of diversification of employment has been so set at work that officers starting from the rank of superintendent of police are appointed to managerial positions in other departments and public sector undertakings. While it enables them to acquire experience of working in other types of organisations, as members of a uniformed service, it has created a widening gulf between them and the men they should command, diluted their loyalty and devotion to their service, and seriously impeded the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills essential for their performance efficiency in the police service.

A scientific approach to the question of expansion of the police organisation in accordance with the social needs in a democracy, could have not only modernised the police force in the country but would have offered better opportunities for promotion to the largest number of officers within the service itself. Extra departmental assignments hardly enable the police officers to improve the quality of policing or to

humanise the policeman in his day-to-day dealing with the public or reform his ways as to cleanse the image of the police.

At the lower levels especially, the police have undergone a measure of politicisation so as to forge a direct link between the junior officers of the force and ministers cutting across the disciplinary lines and rules and proprieties of subordination. For reasons which are now intelligible, the collector no longer can claim that he is in full control of the district police which consists of the superintendent of police, additional superintendent of police, subdivisional police officers as they are known in West Bengal or assistant or deputy superintendents of police of sub-divisions, inspectors of circles, sub-inspectors and assistant sub-inspectors of station houses or police stations and head constables and constables, apart from a contingent of armed reserve police and a unit of criminal investigation department.

Depending upon the requirements of a state, two or more districts are formed into a range which is under the control of a deputy inspector-general of police who is the immediate superior of the superintendent of police. After the creation of the post of director general of police, at the state level, there are many inspectors-general of police and additional inspectors-general of police with defined spheres of jurisdiction for specific portfolios who exercise control over the deputy inspectors general. The unprecedented expansion of the police organisation and the proliferation of the line superiors of the superintendent of police, have created a new web of intra-departmental interrelations and loyalties which does not seem to add to the authority of the collector over the district police.

The strengthening of the departmental line of the police as evidenced by the powers of the deputy inspector-general of police for supervision over the superintendents of police, his function as a coordinator for the activities of the police of the districts constituting his range and his reporting direct to the inspector general of police in charge of law and order or the director-general of police subtly seek to conceal the character of the authority the collector has over the district police. In almost of all the states, even otherwise, the police exhibits a tendency to project itself as independent of the

collector, and under political patronage, it does not fail to advance the claim that given magisterial powers, it can as well successfully maintain law and order and extend justice to the people. In a democratic polity police is an instrument to be used within the bounds of law by a detached and independent authority like the magistracy, and to allow it to be its own user will be an invitation to disaster.

The British had brought Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, the three presidency towns as they were then called, for the purpose of maintenance of public order, under police commissioners invested with magisterial powers. After independence the commissionerate system has been introduced in metropolises like Pune, Nagpur, Bangalore and even in the capital of the country, New Delhi, without properly assessing its advantages. Combination of powers in the commissioner of police enables him to act swiftly in an emergent situation but its consequences upon the individual and institutions will be too late to be manifest. The user of force cannot be the judge of its abuse nor can caution and coercion and reason and passion co-exist.

The collector who is indulgent to the police or who fails to assert his personality to resist the pressures of the police in the matter of use of force, may in all probability lend justification for the demand of magisterial powers by the police. If representative institutions are to function in their true spirit, it will be a prescription without alternative that the district police should remain under independent magisterial control and direction or be regulated by an enlightened local democracy. In a political culture moulded by multiplicity of political parties, the maintenance of law and order will be too difficult a function to be performed exclusively by bureaucrats employing varying standards and individual styles. The policy of law and order is therefore, formulated on an all state basis and periodically reviewed by the political executive. The collector in spite of the powers independently conferred on him by the blue book for the purpose of law and order, has to comply with the policy for which the political executive is answerable to the legislature.

Between 1946-53 the bureaucracy has put in every form of resistance against the separation of the judiciary from the

executive as it would worsen the law and order situation throughout the country and lead to rapid multiplication of crimes. And actually when the situation of law and order deteriorated, it was not obviously attributable to the division of powers but admittedly to the social degeneration brought about by the changing character of politics and bureaucratic ineptitude, inaction or apathy. Although the collector has ceased to play the roles of complainant, policeman, prosecutor and judge, he is made executive magistrate with substantial preventive and executive powers. His immediate subordinate, the sub-divisional officer or sub-collector has been concurrently designated as first class executive magistrate while in most states the powers of second class magistrate are conferred upon the tahsildar. The collector and his junior officers thus retained their capacity to meet squarely the situations of law and order in normal times in the district.

Police standing orders, manuals or similar instruments unequivocally vest in the collector the control and direction of the district police for the preservice of public order. It is incumbent upon the superintendent of police to keep the collector informed of the state of peace in the district and the line of action he proposes to take from time to time to preserve it. He sends a report periodically, normally every fortnight, in confidence on the crime situation in the district to the collector through whom he routes his tour diary to his official superiors. It is obligatory on the part of the superintendent of police to bring immediately to the knowledge of the collector felonious offences or serious crimes committed in the district and any apprehended breach of peace. In almost every state a particular column is set apart in the annual confidential report of the superintendent of police for the collector to give his assessment of the performance of the district police chief especially his dealings with the public.

In certain states like Tamil Nadu, there are specific provisions under which the collector may prepare an annual report on the conduct of the work of the superintendent of police and transmit it direct to the chief secretary of the state endorsing a copy of it to the director general of police. However this practice is hardly followed by the collector due to a plurality of reasons including its long disuse. The judgements

delivered by the courts containing strictures or adverse comments on the police are sent to the collector for suitable action. The collector has superintendence over the prison administration of his district by virtue of his position as the chairman of the district jail committee, and the inspecting authority of sub-jails is his lower most subordinate, the tahsildar or deputy tahsildar. Yet the collector's relations with the police call for a smoothening process involving tact, patience and determination.

The discipline of the police force which begins in the parade ground is the foremost responsibility of the superintendent of police. The respect he commands from the force and the loyalty he nurtures for his superiors indeed serve as a strength to his personality in his relations with the collector. In fact, the proclivity of the superintendent of police to establish equations with the collector begins not in the district but as early as the stage of his recruitment and training itself. The ego of the police to overlook the magisterial powers of the collector essential for the minimum safeguards for the citizen against the exercise of unbridled force and legitimising the use of the requisite measure of force, is inflated at times by the weakness or over-friendliness or indulgence of the collector. Invariably, the police has the penchant for excesses particularly when moved into action against any protesting group not excluding of the blind.

The very function of coordination is to establish order and cohesion in an organisation for its orderly operation so as to serve its objective in promoting the collective welfare of the people. Coordination of law and order cannot successfully be done if a single major component of its machinery functions erratically in such a way as to produce friction. An intelligent collector will use therefore his position to work out a personal strategy so that the police will be psychologically prepared for the instinctive acceptance of his authority. The impediments and inhibitions arising from the equations of power can be overcome if the approach of the collector to the superintendent of police is marked by cordiality, spirit of partnership and informality free from pretensions of his service affiliation. In turn, the superintendent of police should shed his romantic assumptions and respect the magisterial powers of the

collector. It will then be possible for them to develop a sound understanding to make coordination in the field of law and order a wholesome cooperation between them.

However, it does not seem to be a prudent course for the collector to depend entirely on the police for information on a probable threat to public tranquillity or a likely imminent eruption of social disturbances. Caught in the meshes of laxity, indifference, evasion, overconfidence, negligence and casualness, the police may fail to appreciate the gravity of a worsening situation and inform the collector sufficiently in advance. It is, therefore, necessary that the collector should organise an intelligence system of his own independent of the police by selectively established social contacts and opening avenues of productive public relations. The collector is *ex officio* chairman of several voluntary social bodies and advisory committees in the district and if he could utilise his personal knowledge and good offices at the right time, he would be able to settle amicably the issues which might otherwise prove to be explosive.

There are quite a few occasions when popular passion has yielded to the tactful persuasion of the collector and thereby, the use of force was rendered a primitive and immoral weapon. The ability of the collector in maintaining law and order will largely depend upon his ability to feel the pulse of the social forces in his district. The restatement of the policy of law and order on all-state basis at the level of the political executive, the supervision, control and coordination of the district police by a supra-district police authority as the deputy inspector general of police and the loyalty and allegiance the superintendent of police has for his line superiors, if not enlarged the freedom of the collector in dealing with the problems of law and order, certainly diluted the authority of the collector over the district police.

Coordination of law and order is contingent upon the collector's capacity to establish mastery over the socio-political dynamics and to make himself effective as the leader of the official fraternity of the district. Crimes and criminality are a part of the social behaviour and they can be kept under check by prompt and unbiased application of law and making conscious effort aimed at improving the social

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morals in which voluntary agencies and independent intellectuals have a major role to play. No other society by its own corrupting politics and continuous erosion of ethical values, undergoes a conscious process of degeneration as an inescapable part of its destiny than India.

### *Development*

The role of coordination in the sphere of development is assigned to the collector not in all states but mainly in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana. With the formation of zila parishad and mandal panchayat under the new statute in Karnataka, the district development board has become redundant. The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959 was amended on January 22, 1987 to provide for a modified three tier system of democratic decentralisation consisting of a village panchayat, mandal praja parishad and zila praja parishad.

The reforms carried out to the developmental set-up in Andhra Pradesh in 1987, have brought into being a new body called the zila abhivruddhi sameeksha mandal (district development review board) equivalent to the district planning and development board in some states, under the chairmanship of a minister and the collector is made its *ex officio* secretary. The collector is relieved of his erstwhile responsibilities regarding the zila parishad. The chairman of the zila parishad is directly elected but it is not the vice-chairman but the collector who heads it in the absence of the chairman.

As the district planning board was constituted to facilitate planning from below in many states notably in Gujarat, the collector was made initially its chairman but he was eventually replaced by a minister who was made responsible for the development of the district assigned to him. Whether the collector has a direct role in development or not, his active association with the district planning board or parallel organs like the abhivruddhi mandal in Andhra Pradesh, is an important factor that makes him strong enough to have a voice in developmental activities on his volition.

The collector presides over the district development board in Jammu and Kashmir, the DDC in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala



and Tamil Nadu. Although the introduction of the three-tier system of democratic decentralization is actively contemplated in Jammu and Kashmir, it has at present a panchayat elected through adult franchise in every village and a district development board headed by the deputy commissioner in every district.

The DDC like the district development board has a mixed composition. In Jammu and Kashmir while the village panchayats of a district are under the supervision of the district panchayat officer, the secretary of the district development board is the deputy director (planning). The deputy commissioner has certain powers in regard to the village panchayats but the overall authority in charge of the panchayats is the director of rural development and panchayats. On the district development board are members of Parliament and the state assembly elected from the district and the representatives of the notified area committees and town area committees. The DDC consists of three broad categories of members, representative officials, specialists or technical experts and administrative personnel. Besides departmental, district officers, members of Parliament and members of the state assembly, chairmen of panchayat unions and chairmen of municipalities hailing from the district are members of the DDC.

Where the collector is the district authority for development, its coordination is his direct responsibility. Most of the functions in the field of development are technical in nature and most personnel are specialists either by training or experience. In development, a major part of the activities to be coordinated, is confined to the field. In order to accomplish the coordination of field operations, the collector must gain personal knowledge of local conditions and the functions of each field agency and an intimate acquaintance with the field supervisors and be prepared to acknowledge himself as a leader of his equals. He would then be able to bring the various operating units in the needed proximity and infuse them with team spirit in order that they may work together with the resolve of realising the objectives.

The collector's leadership in the area of development has two phases, the democratic and the bureaucratic. His

bureaucratic leadership has a tradition supported by several statutes, orders, manuals and instructions which make it mandatory for the district level departmental officers to render assistance and advice to him in his capacity as the head of the district administration. The democratic phase of his leadership started assuming importance ever since the days of Lord Ripon who is the father of local self-government in India. In independent India, the collector is given powers to play an important role in the implementation of the programme of democratic decentralization. In Kerala where there is only a single tier local democracy as manifested by a panchayat in every revenue village (pakuti or amsom) and in Tamil Nadu which has a panchayat union in every block, the collector has a significant function with regard to the programme budget and operation of the panchayat or panchayat union.

In the early years of independence memberships of legislators on the DDC proved to be an asset to the collector in securing the people's participation in developmental activities but with the change in the pattern of politics, their presence in the council poses a tacit challenge to the democratic leadership of the collector and causes at times a measure of discomfort to him. Nevertheless, their articulation of varying social opinions lends courage to the collector to face difficult situations and bring about accord between places and plan projects and fix priorities and posteriorities as objectively as possible.

The DDC or district development board is in practice a versatile body which can assume three forms namely, (i) a collective body to advise the government on planning and development, (ii) a substitute for a representative institution at the district level, and (iii) a machinery for coordination of the district administration.

Being a composite body, the council has to make conscious effort to reconcile the diverging views and attitudes to obviate the possibilities of emotional conflicts and to forge a common outlook conducive to developmental objectives. The presence of a large number of specialists and experts may tend to create the problem of acceptance of authority and an environment of compulsion to cater for their ego needs to get the best out of them. The membership of the legislators is likely to enhance the sensitivity of the council especially on protocol and

precedence and pave way to groupism and political pressures. Likewise, the dead-weight of bureaucratic vices in terms of clandestine resistance, convenient procrastination, inordinate delay, immobility and evasion may frustrate the popular representatives including the presidents of the panchayat unions, and defeat the very purpose for which they are taken in. The multiplicity of lines controlling the district level officers may contribute to perplexing over-communication or confusion resulting from cross-communication. It is not improbable that departmental loyalties may sometimes encourage district level officers to establish direct links with their headquarters overlooking the proprieties expected of them as members of the council and the general authority of the collector. The multi-functional nature of development and its extensive field work may give rise to unanticipated management problems, tension and disalignment of operations. These developments can be faced only by a leadership intellectually brilliant, resourceful and inspiring which will be rather rare to be located in bureaucratic life.

As chairman of several committees of public importance in the district, the collector is advantageously placed to strengthen his leadership to secure the participation of the people in developmental activities. Attendance of official members of the DDC is a matter of duty and it cannot be arranged through the proxy of a junior as in a general coordination meeting of the collector elsewhere. In his effort aimed at coordination of developmental activities, the collector has the assistance of the divisional development officer in Tamil Nadu and the assistant commissioner of development in Kerala who both are field officers.

In technical matters the collector is normally guided by the opinion of the experts. It has been the established practice of most state governments to accept the advice of the experts working at the district level in technical matters and except in exceptional circumstances they have not upheld the objections of even the administrative heads of departments or the members of the board of revenue against such advice. The difference between the collector and the district level technical officers are in the first instance referred to their line superiors and finally to the government for settlement. If the position

of the collector as the principal coordinator of the district administration is to be strengthened, he should not allow matters of disagreement to get out of his hands. By adopting an entrepreneurial management style, the collector may find in the DDC a 'brains-trust' or a reliable source of socio-technical intelligence for the district administration in general and development in particular.

An advisory body for the government, the DDC can as well be a deliberative body capable of providing to the collector a more realistic picture of the local conditions and feelings of the people on various issues. It also serves as a forum for discussing the affairs of the various departments other than development which require the special attention of the collector especially from the angle of coordination.

In states where the collector has no direct role in development or where the collector has the responsibility of general coordination, the instrument of coordination available to him is the conventional meeting of district level officers. During the heyday of the British rule, the coordination meeting had its full utility but in the departmental self-assertion that has become customary after independence, it has been in spite of the issue of numerous orders to restore its past effectiveness, reduced to a ritual. The departmental officers seldom find the time of meeting convenient or reconcilable with their busy schedules, and often arrange their presence in it through proxies who by their position are too juniors to make any significant contributions to its objectives. This sort of frivolous deputisation causes considerable discomfiture to the collector but he seems to be uniformly sceptical of his authority to enforce their presence in person as it can hardly transcend the defending high walls of their department.

Despite the periodic meetings, general coordination of the district administration is ceased to have any major importance mainly because the departments have taken fully upon themselves the task of formulation and implementation of their individual policies and consequently the burden of accountability for their performance.

Over-burdened with functions and over-armed with powers which he can hardly exercise in the mounting political pressures and capricious social sensitivities, the collector has to

struggle for time for such jobs as coordination for which he is individually responsible. Enormous time is spent by the collector on routine work, observing protocols and receiving dignitaries and visitors but for essential work which he cannot get done by delegation, he occasionally has to excuse himself. General coordination is ceased to have its significance of yester-years mostly because the pattern of district administration remains apparently the same and there has taken place imperceptibly considerable variations in its working relationships. The fact that the collectorate type of district administration has outlived its utility is concealed in the standards of Indian politics and the calibre of Indian politicians. In the crowd of compulsions, a viable alternative to the existing model is hard to emerge.

Approaching the district administration as it exists to-day, the problem of its coordination appears to be too complex but it can hardly defy solution if there is political preparedness and social will to effect the necessary changes in the organisational set-up. The task of coordination in any situation will be relatively easy to be accomplished if the right tool is given to the right man and the right man is given the right job by the leadership. As an organisation expands and functions proliferate, the problem of coordination tends to be greater in magnitude demanding expert attention.

# *Political Pressures on District Administration*

*S.N. Sadasivan*

Administration has ever been the main instrument for regulating the ways of society. In democracy, although politics, administration and social structure are apparently divisible, they often tend to interact so intensely as to make the distinction between them merely theoretical. As a representative system democracy seeks to bring the people and the administration closer to each other through the working of its two main instrumentalities of institutional importance, namely, political parties and pressure groups. Its constitutional structure provides for competitive politics and facilitates the elected majority in the legislature to assume control over the administration legitimately. The civil service is created, protected and regulated by political doctrines to be strictly a neutral force, to preserve the common stock of parties and groups contending for power. The grassroots politics of democracy takes a definite form to be an integral part of the national politics at the district level. Therefore, in constitutional countries, the district or similar territorial unit is an important region both from political and administrative angles.

## *District Administration in the Past*

From the historical perspective, district administration in India was designed to resist political activities and political pressures rather than to generate a climate to enable local social forces to resolve political conflicts in the larger interest of society. In facilitating the introduction of their system of administration, based on the rule of law, the British modified the then existing pattern to the extent necessary to make it

really effective primarily for the purpose of realising land revenue and enforcing law and order.

The centralization measures they had taken in building up a prefectorial model district administration in a feudal bureaucratic society yielded quick dividends from the angle of their imperial objectives but the consequences of such measures could be abated to some extent only with their programme of participation of Indians in the administration and with the introduction of local self-government. However, important functions and powers of the district administration remained intact in the hands of the collector who as the head of the district and the representative of the government in the district, was also authorised to exercise supervisory and regulatory jurisdictions over all activities in his territory and to use the residuary powers according to his discretion.

Politics was indeed a minor affair in the district until 1920 and important Indian political leaders being of high stature and having imbibed the values of western liberalism, established a rapport or equation directly with the British rulers either of the provincial or central level. As a result of the pattern of relationship they evolved, the influence that was allowed to be exerted over the district administration was from the aristocracy friendly to the British power in India. By and large, the influence of this aristocracy was employed for the preservation of its interests and securing honours and titles from the British government. However, with the rapid development of politics and political parties between 1920 and 1940, the district administration was increasingly brought into the field of politics, not to associate the people with its activities, nor to provide positions to political leaders, but as a machinery to control political activities and the law and order problems arising therefrom.

Although policies for the maintenance of political peace were largely formulated by the government, the district head was assigned an independent role in their implementation. Except in large cities and provincial capitals, the responsibility for the maintenance of public tranquillity was directly shouldered by the collector whose discretion in this matter was as wide as his freedom. For 25 years prior to independence, the district administration was constantly confronting

political forces in the country rather than being influenced by them.

With the advent of self-government, the role of the district administration was so changed that on the one side it had to be loyal and obedient to a new political executive, the members of which under the flag of the Congress often in the past defied its authority, and, on the other, to deal with political parties outside the government and their agitations organised as an element of national political culture. And in course of time when the Congress launched mass political campaigns in the states where some non-Congress parties were in power, the district administration had to perform one of the most difficult and delicate tasks of maintaining social peace under the vigilant eyes of the central authorities.

The responsibilities brought about by the institution of a full-fledged democracy were hardly capable of effecting a major change in the structure of the district administration except for the panchayat raj especially in Maharashtra and Gujarat in place of the old local self-government consisting of taluk boards and district boards. Although in theory the relationship between the collector and other departmental district officers entered a new flexible phase, it remained more or less as before in theory. In the new democratic process, the district administration has not only to be responsive to the various demands of the people but also has to be accommodative enough to admit social groups, political parties and other organized bodies for the purpose of entertaining their appeals and representations either on their behalf or on behalf of their clientele, supporters, approaches or help-seekers.

In democracies, pressure groups are constantly on the move for the promotion of their interests and they have, of late, attained institutional importance. In their interaction with the government and political parties, pressure groups have been able to provide some of the best political leaders and government executives and take up the causes of less articulate groups. However, in India, except the communal ones, they are, on the whole, not well-organized nor yet equipped for regular institutional operations and, therefore, they tend to habitate themselves in major political parties for



achieving their objectives. Paradoxically, some of the political parties like the Republican Party of India, in view of the environmental constraints and social limitations, are forced to function as pressure groups. As a result, at certain levels, more obviously in the district, it has become difficult to distinguish clearly between the manifestations of political influences and pressure group activities.

### *District—An Important Political Unit*

Generally, political parties in India, save some of those believing in revolutionary ideologies, have taken the district as an important unit of their organisation and, therefore, it is a part of their operational strategy to establish a close proximity with the district administration. As champions of the causes of common masses, parties have a responsibility to represent their grievances, redress for many of which can be obtained from the district office. For obvious reasons, the pattern of influence varies from state to state, although identity can be found between the matters for which parties compete among themselves and intercede with the district office. By and large, the political influences on the district head are assessed by the following factors:

1. The attitude of the party in power, especially its political executive towards administration and administrators.
2. The number of ministers, Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) elected from the district and their stature and local prominence.
3. The number of political parties and their standing and strength in the district.
4. The types of issues with which the political parties are concerned and their relation or relevance to the causes or demands of the people in the district.
5. The capacity of the parties for mass mobilisation and the emotional strength of the people to respond to the call of the parties. In other words the agitational potentials of the parties in the district.

6. The powers and functions of the collector and his general ability to bring about social reconciliation.
7. The reputation and personality of the collector and his social disposition.
8. The position obtained by the party leaders in their informal relations with the collector or the equations they have established with him.

Due to the free functioning of political parties, the increasing awareness of the people of their rights and the training undergone by the civil servants, the district administration not only realises that political interventions and influences are facts of official life in a responsible government but admits that they are, at times, necessary, and perhaps even inevitable. Apart from furthering their own vocational interest, politicians as representatives of the people, have a responsibility to solve their problems and redress their grievances. The masses in India are still the victims of illiteracy, ignorance and fear, and in the continuing absence of voluntary social agencies, only well-organised political parties have the strength and courage to espouse their cause and fight for their rights.

Of course, on account of the past, there is still an area of harboured distrust and disregard between politicians and the district office but it is gradually transforming into one of mutual understanding and esteem. In states like Kerala where several opposition parties could remain in power for fairly long periods, political leaders are fully aware of the difficulties of administrators and tend to appreciate their points of view, especially on a contested issue provided they are supported by cogent and adequate reasons. Again in smaller states like Kerala where normally pressures are applied directly on the political executive even for relatively small matters, the district office is less frequented by local politicians. However, ministerial intervention with the collector is of a different kind. Ministers both of the Centre and the states directly contact the collector for getting things done either for their constituents or parties and unless he has enough political sense, tact, patience and reason and capacity to present his points of view, he may create situations for a confrontation or may be forced to take wrong decisions. Nevertheless,

as political heads of departments, ministers are, on the whole, inclined to appreciate the difficulties of the collector provided the matters of their intervention are not directly related to their political interests.

*Purpose of Political Pressures on the Collectorate*

Although the purposes for which political pressures are applied on the collectorate cannot exhaustively be enumerated or foreseen, they can be broadly classified as follows:

1. Postings and transfers of employees belonging to class III and class IV services.
2. Appointments to class III and class IV services which are temporary and short-term especially in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
3. Appointment of government pleaders and prosecutors in states where it is done on the recommendations of the collector.
4. Issue of licences for fair-price shops in states where the district supply officer is under the control of the collector and the collector has the authority for it.
5. Dropping of action taken against smugglers of essential commodities particularly foodgrains in border districts and against hoarders and black-marketeers.
6. Settlement of local issues in which political parties have taken sides.
7. Eviction of illegal occupants of government or private land and allotment of surplus land in rural areas and house-sites and plots in cities.
8. Relief in times of emergencies such as drought, deluge and famine.
9. Acquisition of private property for public purposes.
10. Facilities for political activities and withdrawal of cases arising from political conflicts.

Mostly, convenient postings and transfers are sought through political channels by the employees who could not establish proximity with key district office personnel or who have more contact with political leaders. Even in the district headquarters where proper registers for postings and transfers

are maintained, collectors are approached for more advantageous transfers often on less convincing grounds, and the intelligent and tactful among them do not find any harm to their prestige in ordering such transfers if no injury is caused to the interest of other employees. However, friction is a possibility where the intervening political elements fail to appreciate the justness of the transfers ordered by the collector on disciplinary grounds. In this respect the persistency of an influential or important minister can cause considerable damage to the disciplinary structure of the district office and erosion of the authority of the office of the collector.

Ministers, of course, may step in to stop transfers motivated by personal prejudice or vindictiveness because administrative correction in the interest of justice and fair-play is the responsibility of the political authorities and, if it is not done at the appropriate time, the cumulative frustration may prove to be fatal to the morale of the employees, more so at the lower levels of the government. Enforcement of discipline must be fully in conformity with the principles of justice.

Although the power of the collector to make appointments to subordinate positions is limited all over the country, it differs from state to state. Its variation and the levels of unemployment are the two factors that enable one to gauge the political pressures exercised over the collectorate in the matter of appointments. Politicians are a class who normally thrive by full promises and partial performance and they have to placate a number of social groups especially in the field of employment. A major national problem to be solved in all developing countries is unemployment and every political party is programme-bound to solve it to the satisfaction of the people.

Normally those who approach politicians to secure temporary jobs in the collectorate or a clerical or non-technical position in a cooperative business or a cooperative hospital under the control of the collector, are persons who have little scope elsewhere and been environmentally handicapped, and politicians cannot ignore their appeal for help. If the collector and the political leaders alike realise their social responsibility

to the unemployed, some useful criteria for recruitment can amicably be evolved taking into consideration the efficiency required in the district office and the weightage to be given to the backward sections.

Where the collector has proved his impartiality and determination to go by the merit of job-seekers for their selection, hardly has there been any political intervention, while undue favour shown to a candidate or a nepotic inclination on the part of the official often provoked strong political reaction. However, occasions are not few when the collector has to surrender his best judgement in the matter of appointment to expediency under ministerial pressures. As unemployment becomes more and more acute, it is a common phenomenon that higher and higher influences will come to the aid of seekers of smaller and smaller jobs. Thus in Kerala, ministers belonging to various parties sometimes personally indicate their choice to the collector for temporary appointment to class IV cadre.

Recommendations for appointments to the posts of the district government pleader and prosecutor are, however, no easy task for the collector. Besides political parties, powerful communities vie with one another for obtaining these posts for their qualified members because these are influential, prestigious and remunerative by the social standards of the district. In smaller states, it is quite often possible that ministers might have already informed the collector of their preferences and, therefore, he is compelled to camouflage his recommendations as unbiased to escape from local criticism. However, a discriminating collector has not failed to sponsor the names of the deserving candidates while gracefully accommodating the ministerial nominations in the descending lines of the list.

Obtaining a licence for a fair-price shop to a locally influential person is a big favour a political leader can do in stabilising his importance and hegemony in his district. Politicians invariably take up the cases of the rejected applicants with the collector and at times organize agitations or protest demonstrations in order to pressurise him to concede their claims. With the introduction of cooperatives for the sale of controlled commodities although competition for individual

licences is weakened to some extent, party affiliations have led the cooperatives to compete for cornering the supplies of more popular items in their motive for bigger profits. They also find politicians' help indispensable to cover up the irregularities and lapses, and the failures to comply with statutory requirements. In all these cases the collector has to withstand enormous pressures if he has to enforce the concerned rules and regulations.

Smuggling is, in fact, an illegal movement of goods from a less profitable market to a more profitable market. While it is a violation of the man-made laws, its success is on account of its compatibility with the trend of nature respected in a free market economy. Within the country the propensity of every state is to encourage in-smuggling of essential commodities which it is short of and discourage their out-smuggling. Mostly inter-state smuggling is in foodgrains and, at times, in sugar. In states where detection of smuggling is left primarily to tahsildars and sub-inspectors of police, the smugglers escape effective action due to intelligible reasons.

Anti-smuggling operations in states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala are under the direct control of the collector and once he detains a vehicle (normally a truck or a lorry) with smuggled foodgrains, there can be expected political intervention to free the vehicle and its crew and to shield the men behind its movement. Foodgrain smugglers like hoarders and black-marketeers, are an easy and liberal source of finance for political activities and, therefore, parties, irrespective of their ideologies and affiliations, are interested in getting them out of the hands of law. If their intercession with the collector does not yield result, they attempt to bring ministerial pressure upon him. Often parties contact the collector through their ministers and if he is not resilient and cautious enough to vindicate his action, he may not be successful in defending the cause of law.

It has now become habitual with political parties, to take sides on all issues arising in their neighbourhood and support the contending groups, in stabilizing and consolidating their social base and to obtain financial gains or means of subsistence for their local full-timers. As the authority for the maintenance of public tranquillity, the collector has the

responsibility to bring the conflicting groups to compromise or take action against those who violate the law to the benefit of those who seek its protection. The disputants normally come to the collector backed by their respective party full-timers and their issues range from elopement to encroachment. They try to enlist the support of their leaders and ministers and they demand the indulgence of the collector according to the strength they mustered.

It is not unusual for a collector to receive instructions on telephone from a minister as to how to act in a particular case and unless he has inexhaustible patience, power of persuasion, a sound personal strategy and high integrity, the independence of his judgement may not entirely be in favour of justice where it is due. When the intervention is without the support of ministers, the social temperament of the collector is a great asset to his discretion and freedom to bring the disputants to an agreement on the lines suggested by him.

Political leaders are themselves directly interested in the allotment of surplus land in the rural areas and plots and house-sites in towns and cities and they are approached by people of all walks of life to get suitable allotments. Generally party leaders tend to give priority to their own needs and to the requests of their relations and supporters in their approach for allotment of land. As land reform is at present entirely within the purview of the states, the party in power in a state is in full control over the distribution of the available land there.

In states where the demand for surplus land and the pressure of population on land are not too heavy, the collector has been given powers to distribute the private land above the ceiling fixed and the vacant land belonging to the government. However, the powers of the deputy commissioner (collector) and the assistant commissioner (sub-collector) in Karnataka to distribute land up to the limit of ten and six acres respectively, were transferred to the land tribunals, upon their formation. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu the collector still has the authority for land allotment but it is often used under ministerial directions. The land tribunals in Kerala are administrative courts headed by junior officers of the rank of tahsildar and they have powers under the Kerala Land Reforms Act

not only to adjudicate land disputes but transfer the ownership of private or public land to the occupants.

The ceiling in the northern and western states is higher than that of the southern states and the task of redistribution of surplus land is not very complicated there. Further, due to political tackling of the problem in some of these states, the collector's role is simplified to a great extent. However, in states where the main burden of distribution of land and allotment of plots and sites is placed on the collector, he has to develop an enormous amount of both political sense and skill to prove his impartiality and to admit the claims of the really deserving. The eviction of illegal occupants from both private and government lands is indeed a very complicated task for the collector.

In states where militant political parties have a popular base or well-trained cadres, illegal occupation of vacant and forest lands is encouraged by them as a part of their strategy of expansion and demonstration of their programmatic honesty or ideological sincerity. In Kerala about a lakh of well-organised members of the powerful Catholic church with the support of the marxists occupied extensive areas of forest and temple lands in the closing fifties and early sixties and the occupants themselves organised into a new political party of left orientation and traditional religious affiliation. The 'land grab movement' started by the communists, the socialists and the Republican Party of India on a national basis, however, was not difficult for the district administration to contain, especially in the Congress-ruled states.

Eviction involves a major human problem and a collector with concern for the welfare of the community cannot ignore all its implications and consequences. In evictions, especially mass-evictions, the encroachers have the defence of political parties and are likely to get immense public sympathy. Even if their displacement is for the utilisation of the land for public purposes, their demands will be land for alternative settlement and liquid resources to start a fresh living. Sometimes, their resistance may gain widespread public support and their cause may get more attention from the legislature than expected.

If the collector has the support of the political executive, his task of eviction can more easily be performed by evolving



solutions acceptable to all sides, including, if necessary, reconciling with the situation. The collector can, however, be effective with his eviction plan provided it is imperative, the political executive is neutral and he has explored the means at his disposal to convince the parties concerned of the reasonableness of its purpose. Nonetheless, pressures against eviction exerted on the district administration are from a number of sources and invariably heavy. It is a question on which even the most indifferent citizen has to make a comment related to the functioning of the district administration.

Although reaction against acquisition of private property for industrial or public purposes is not so widely manifest as in the case of eviction, political influences are exercised on the district administration by the affected property-owners in various ways either for excluding their possessions from acquisition or for getting a higher assessment for their property than the prevailing market value. Small owners who have to leave their land and dwelling, often find out local contacts to mediate between them and the lower officials engaged in acquisition and if they are unsuccessful, seek the help of politicians to represent their case before the collector or political parties to agitate to get them justice.

In some states, parties have been successful in persuading either the district authorities or political executive in reversing the decision of acquiring private property if thereby a number of poor families had to suffer. On the other hand, where they have been satisfied with the justness of acquisition for public purposes or common welfare, they have not extended their demands beyond alternative space and shelter for the affected. In avoiding undue hardship to the common man, collectors, well-disposed to social needs, consult the political and social leaders and gather the intelligence necessary for assessing the consequences of acquisition in advance.

Exemption from acquisition is normally sought by influential persons who are regarded as important to political parties and if the collector is successful in harmonising the purpose of acquisition with the interests involved, his administrative talent may have a wider acknowledgement.

Natural calamities like famine, flood and drought demand prompt mobilisation of resources and energies of the district

administration and it is in these contexts that the collector finds the cooperation and assistance of the political leaders of his district, particularly the MPs and MLAs, most essential. People's participation in the implementation of the programme drawn up to fight natural calamities will be freely forthcoming provided their representatives have a role in its formulation. At times to serve his political objectives or to get a favoured treatment to his constituents, it is not unusual for an MP or an MLA to claim his district or taluk as drought or famine affected and it is the responsibility of the collector to verify the conditions there, before he concedes the demand for relief operations. Even if the findings of his enquiry officers are to the contrary, unless he visits the area with the MP or the MLA, and is prepared to make a convincing report to the political executive, there is every likelihood of the legislator making public allegations or complaint to the concerned minister against the collector.

If the collector has to extend his social influence necessary for administrative 'effectivity' and secure popular support to his programme implementation, as far as possible he should not discriminate between one party and another in providing facilities for political activities except in a situation beyond his control. Similarly, prosecution against political workers for violations of law may be launched irrespective of their party affiliations and, of course, with an intention and readiness to adjust with the future course of events. Both in the extension of facilities for political activities and prosecution of political activists, the collector has to be pragmatic enough to adjust with the realities to avoid the exertion of influences and to uphold his administrative ethics based on the concept of rule of law.

There are several other purposes for which the political power seeks the assistance of the district administrative machinery. The more flexible a district administration proves to be in the context of democratic values and discipline, the greater will be the proclivity of politicians to use it for their ends. However, an ideal equilibrium between administrative objectives and political influences can be established in a democracy where there is an effective and responsible opposition and the ruling party has reconciled to the idea of

alternation of power as the most inviolable rule in the ethos of democratic life.

*Political Influence on Administration*

On the whole, collectors of the various states are of the view that of the matters for which politicians intervene or intercede with the district administration, some are just and some are unjust. However, they are conscious of the fact that the contact of politicians with the district office enables them to understand the problems of the people in different dimensions and depths and to determine the extent of popular base each political party has in their districts. It also gives them opportunity to assess the abilities of individual leaders and perceive the nature and implications of the problems for which solutions are sought.

The prevailing opinion in the district offices is that the local leaders of the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Bharatiya Janata Party are trained and well-equipped to present the cases of the people with data painstakingly collected and facts and figures cogently organized. In a district where the Congress is divided into two factions, it is habitual with them to support rival claims in a dispute by demonstrating ministerial loyalties and the task of the collector in bringing them to an agreement is indeed arduous and he may have to face invisible set-backs and hidden hindrances as he proceeds with it.

Political influences in a democracy is inescapable for any administrator. As the ethos of democracy enables society to mould a party system capable of alternation of power, there will be greater possibilities for the preservation of the doctrines of civil service, namely, neutrality, anonymity and continuity to minimise and legitimise the political pressures upon the district administration.

# *District Administration: Alternative Patterns*

*N.R. Inamdar*

Broadly, three alternative patterns of district administration could be marked in view of the Indian experience before and after independence. The pre-independence pattern under the British rule was an integrated pattern under the hegemony of the district collector and magistrate. As and when new functions were grafted on to the district administration, the dominance of the district collector over the functions other than land revenue collection and magisterial was weakened. In this fashion, district offices in education, agriculture, health, etc., came to be separated from the hegemonic control of the district collector to be directly instructed and supervised by the state departments concerned. Even the police department in the districts was for all practical purposes, governed by an independent officer who used to be a British man and as such, aspired to have an independent sphere of control. The formal responsibility in this behalf of the provincial ministers under the dyarchy and the direct accountability of the popular ministers under provincial autonomy, strengthened this autonomous trend.

The second alternative pattern was ushered in after independence when the community development programme was introduced in 1952. Basically the pre-independence British pattern of formal hegemony of the collector over different administrative departments in the district continued in practice even after the inauguration of the community development programme. The developmental functions and responsibilities of the collector increased manifold on account of the addition of the community development

programme activities to his portfolio. The difference from the pre-independence pattern was in respect of the preponderance of the developmental functions over the law and order and regulatory functions of the collector. Secondly, the prevalence of the popular representatives in the development advisory boards at the district and at the taluk levels cut into the overweening dominance of the district collector in regard to the developmental functions. Therefore, this pattern of district administration was qualitatively different from the pre-independence colonial pattern in respect of the large volume of developmental functions and democratic orientation.

The third pattern emerged with the institution of the panchayat raj or democratic decentralization from 1959 onwards beginning with the states of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. A parallel, and in normal times, more important machinery in the nature of the zila parishads and the panchayat samitis was set up in different states of the country. So far, there was no competitive mechanism within the district that had a tendency to reduce or affect the overall importance of the district collector in respect of power, authority and prestige. But, the institution of the panchayat raj tended to be looked upon as a more useful mechanism from the point of view of the welfare of the rural people than the district collector. During times of national or environmental emergency such as droughts and floods, the district collector came into his own and overshadowed the zila parishads and the panchayat samitis, even employing them as the instruments for the supervening emergency functions. But the net result of the new situation was the relatively less significance of the district collector among the various mechanisms created in the district after independence.

The additional administrative structures created in the district, such as banks, industrial estates, state transport network, agricultural marketing organizations and cooperatives, private educational institutions, and social welfare bodies whittled down the superimposing presence of the district collector. Some of the new functions vested in the collector, however, restored the lost balance. These functions were, district planning, employment guarantee scheme, drought prone areas programmes, etc. Political instability and disturbed

law and order situation have increased the responsibilities of the collector and to the extent brought him more authority and prestige

The problem is how to restore the coherence and integrity of the district administration without sapping its vitals of democratic orientation and development contents. A new alternative pattern could be suggested to restore the much needed coherence and integrity to the district administration. The district collector would be the overall head of the district administration. Assisting him, there would be additional collectors/deputy collectors in charge of the functions of: (a) land revenue and allied matters; (b) general administration and miscellaneous functions such as elections, census, and civil supplies; (c) planning and developmental functions; and (d) coordination and supervision over local governments.

The last function does not imply any antidemocratic or extra-democratic control over the democratically elected and functioning local governments including the zila parishads, panchayat samitis and the village panchayats, and municipal bodies. It has been experienced that several activities, particularly in respect of planning and development can yield better results, if they are coordinated at the district level. Provisions exist today regarding coordination in town planning and regional planning in the legislations pertaining to the panchayat bodies and municipal organisations. But on account of the separate functioning of the local governments, no such coordination is possible today. There exists a local government cell in the collector's office, but it does not have a positive role to play in regard to coordination of the planning and developmental functions of the local governments.

Similarly, the district planning cell in the collector's establishment merely puts together the development plans of the zila parishads, municipal bodies and other public organizations. The district planning office should, in fact, be headed by an experienced statistician-cum-economist. He has to take initiative and do a considerable pioneering work in collecting and compiling physical, social and economic data through the village, block and town/city authorities. He has to prepare an inventory of fresh statistics necessary for designing blue-prints of development programmes and schemes. He should direct

and instruct the village, block and municipal offices accordingly. He will have to monitor the collection of these new statistics from these establishments.

The other two branches have been with the district collector even before independence. In view of the additional responsibilities and functions of the district administration envisaged above, the size of the districts may have to be reduced. Steps also may be needed to be taken to broaden the base of selection of officers for appointments as district collectors, additional and deputy collectors. Officers with experience in social and economic development, could be inducted to share the additional responsibilities, anxieties and agonies of these onerous offices.

# *District Administration: Design of a New System*

*Fani Bhushan Das*

The institution of district magistrate and collector is a legacy of British rule. Many social and economic reforms carried out after independence have given new hopes to the people. To fulfil these hopes, it is necessary to expedite the process of change through the design of a suitable 'system'. In the new socio-economic environment, the district administration has to reorganise itself not only to solve the present problems but to initiate suitable action programmes at the grassroots level to mould the future for the establishment of a humane community.

India's agricultural economy justifies the disperse growth of villages. It is to be reckoned that in spite of the progress of industrialisation in the country, the village system continues to strengthen its base. Consolidation of settlements leading to urbanised structures with the progress of industrialisation is a myth. It is, therefore, necessary to reinforce the village economy for the healthy and balanced growth of agricultural and industrial sectors. Analysis of human organisations in a predominantly agricultural society highlights the necessity of smaller village settlements for effective channelisation of socio-economic activities. Before independence, the villages were subjected to serious stresses and strains. The rulers restricted their activities mainly to the physical space where there were heavy concentrations of population which were subsequently recognised as urban centres. As a result, welfare of the people living in the villages was completely neglected.

Independence electrified the spirit of the people both in the urban and in the rural areas. The frustrated rural youths were



in a hurry for a change and they rushed to the urban areas. However after sometime, the rural migrants become parasites. The five-year plans spelled out many programmes for the development of the village but the desired result of improving the economic condition of the rural masses is yet to be achieved. At the village level the conflict of values between younger and older generations has also aggravated the level of dissatisfaction. An unhealthy trend of 'spoon-feeding' has developed in the village. Unless the villagers are motivated to participate whole-heartedly in various programmes of development it will not be possible to achieve the objective of total development. A 'system' should be evolved for the effective execution of the designed programmes at the grassroots levels.

The conceptual foundation of the grassroots management should involve:

1. harnessing youth energy in the village itself by engaging them in gainful occupations;
2. motivating the youths: (a) to take the responsibility of socio-economic problem of every family of the village in close collaboration with the government machinery; (b) to fill up the gap between the required socio-economic infrastructure of the village and that provided by the government;
3. developing a strong sense of belonging for the village and an attitude of 'self-help' for the creation of homogeneous village organisations; and
4. creating the necessary institution at the village level for channelisation of socio-economic activities in the right direction.

It will not be possible for any government to provide 100 per cent employment to all youths. Considering the rate of growth of population and pace of development, the urban centres in the settlement system cannot provide employment to all. The process of urbanisation to bring about socio-economic changes in a predominantly rural society, has not been very useful. The answer to the problem is to 'hold back' the youths in villages in gainful occupations. In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary to motivate the youths,

besides imparting various vocational training to them. Once the object of motivation is achieved the youths can be settled in the villages employing them in schemes of the government, like integrated rural development, 20-point programme, economic rehabilitation of rural poor, etc.

The 'family' being the basic social organisation is to be provided with adequate socio-economic opportunity for its growth. The welfare of 'each' family is the ultimate objective of any democratic government. Broad policies and action programmes for development are formulated at higher levels of administration, and they in course of time percolate to the lowest level of social organisation. The gap between the highest and the lowest level of the administrative hierarchy is so wide as to dilute the very objective of execution of programme at the level of the village, unless adequate steps are taken to design a system to deliver the goods. The personnel for the execution of the programmes at the village level are not fully aware of the objective set by the highest level. Besides, they are also not adequately trained and motivated to achieve the objective. It is also not possible to improve their performance with the best efforts of supervising officers. In the 'system' to be designed for delivery of the benefits to the lowest level, the role of the villagers especially the youths should be integrated with the government machinery. They should be so trained and motivated that they themselves should take care of the management of rural affairs. The youths should be engaged in different gainful occupations in the village itself. The 'system' to be built on the conceptual foundations of self-help and sense of belonging.

Presently the villages have lost their cohesiveness resulting in total fragmentation of the community. The forces of group dynamics have become inert and the villages are converted into conglomeration of lifeless brick and mud structures. To correct the existing situation, creation of organic institution in every village is essential to bring the people together for reviving the community building process. It must be achieved by formulation of strategies and action programmes by the district administration.

*The Implementation of the 'System'*

A beginning has been made in 'Kempasara' one of the 2,108 villages of Keonjhar district in Orissa. On October 2, 1981 a meeting was held in the village which was attended by all young and old. The villagers were convinced that even with a million dollar government investment, it will not be possible to achieve the desired result, unless the villagers create an environment of involvement and 'self-help'. Instead of cut-throat spirit strangulating the very base of humanity, the young and old took a vow to change their traditional approach to life and adopt the organic philosophy of life, environment and 'self-help'. During the year 1981-82, after 'Kempasara', the process has been started in one village of each of the rest 12 blocks of the district.

During the year 1982-83 a methodology has been evolved to 'set in' the process in all the 2,108 villages of the district, keeping in view the basic objective of producing the required goods and to ensure proper administration of justice at the village level with the principle of 'self-help' and full participation of the villagers. The process involves:

1. Motivation of the villagers particularly youths for 'self-help' and for full involvement in the village development programmes.
2. The youths of the village are to be assigned different types of gainful employment.
3. The block development officer (BDO) and the extension officers will discuss with the youths and the villagers and finalise the required inputs for each youth and family of the village.
4. The requirement of social and physical infrastructure should be worked out in detail by the block in consultation with the villagers.
5. The BDO should move the district rural development agency (DRDA) for declaring the village as special cluster under integrated rural development, forward applications of the youths and families to the banks for sanction and disbursement of loan and ensure that the benefits are delivered as quickly as possible and

- prepare plans and estimates for development of the physical infrastructure in the village.
6. The extension officer will be accountable for the management and development of 10 to 15 villages. Each village will have a grassroots manager (GRM) properly trained and motivated to look after the welfare of the families of the village.
  7. The BDO should take steps in consultation with different authorities for proper administration of justice in the village.

A block is usually manned by a BDO with 8 to 10 extension officers. There are on an average 150 to 200 villages in a block. Each extension officer has been given charge of 10 to 15 villages for the total welfare for which he is made fully accountable. The extension officer visits his villages at least once a month to properly communicate with the people for effective implementation of the links of the 'system'. Motivating the people, in the desired direction, is the most challenging job to be accomplished. A hierarchy of communication process is established in which the GRM is at the lowest level and the BDO is at the top level. The GRM is the most important person directly responsible for the management of rural affairs. He is not a government employee. He belongs to the village for which he has taken the responsibility of welfare of each and every family. The key personnel are the GRM, extension officers and BDO who are to be trained and motivated for the development and management of the village. An "Institute for Management of Rural Affairs" has been established in the rural surroundings of Gonasika, a growth centre located 30 kms. away from Keonjhar. This Institute has a pivotal role to play in the motivation and training of the key personnel for ensuring healthy growth of the 'system' so that rural environment becomes organic to provide adequate scope for fulfilment of ambitions and aspirations of millions of people living in country sides.

#### *National Scene and 'The System'*

The designed system is one of the grassroots approaches to

strengthen the socio-economic base which will yield the desired results for consolidation at the national level.

The effectiveness of the district administration can be increased by adoption of this 'system' which ensures integrated human progress, through restructuring of organisation, community involvement, self-reliance and social action.

# *Collector—The Pivot of District Administration: (An Experience of Gurgaon District)*

*S.Y. Quraishi*

The central role of the collector in the district administration has been a subject of debate right from the beginning. Although the emphasis has been shifting from law and order and regulatory functions to development and coordination, there has been substantial erosion of the collector's authority in recent years presumably due to political interference and influences of pressure groups. Nevertheless, still he is as pivotal as he chooses to be.

During the last few years there is a marked decline in the commitment of the young IAS officers to the job entrusted to them. Some of them waste their time with exaggerated notions of their importance and at the same time enumerating a whole list of alibis for inaction and lack of performance.

The position of the collector in the administrative set-up is unique. He is not only to achieve specific targets assigned to him in various fields but on his own initiative to identify the problems of his district and to do something creatively for finding solutions to them.

## *Profile of District Gurgaon*

Gurgaon is a small district of Haryana bordering Delhi in the south. Despite its proximity to the national capital, it presents a picture of backwardness. It consists of three sub-divisions Gurgaon, Nuh, and Ferozpur Jhirka. The last named touches Alwar and Bharatpur districts of Rajasthan. The sub-divisions of Nuh and Ferozpur Jhirka constitute what is called the 'Mewat' area named after the semi-tribal

Meos who have inhabited the area for over 1000 years. Recurring flood and drought have rendered the economic conditions of the people extremely poor, and the underground brackish water on which they have to depend, has made their living difficult. Historically the district has suffered from neglect, even from the days of the British rule. In the undivided Punjab, its location in the remotest corner, was proved to be a handicap in getting due attention.

The biggest sign of backwardness of the district is its illiteracy. As against the national literacy average of 46.74 per cent for males and 24.88 per cent for females, average for the district is 47.72 per cent and 20.09 per cent respectively. The picture of Mewat is even more dismal with only 32.97 per cent for males and 7.56 for females. The percentage for the Haryana state is 47.7 for males and 22.2 for females which almost corresponds to the national average.

Realising the backwardness of Mewat area the government set up a high powered board called the Mewat development board headed by the chief minister to propose various development programmes. For the coordination and monitoring of these programmes a district level agency called the Mewat development agency under the deputy commissioner was created as a registered body. A task force identified poverty, ignorance, orthodoxy and vested interests as the reasons for low literacy. However, the more specific causes which emerged were the following:

- (a) Lack of school buildings: Most of the schools in the region had no building at all and were mostly held under trees, or in a chaupal.
- (b) Shortage of teachers: The shortage of teachers was acute and the teacher-pupil ratio in some cases was as high as 1:120 against the official norm of 1:40. It was found that the teachers avoided being posted in Mewat mainly because the area lacked even the minimum facilities for civilized life.
- (c) Shortage of Urdu knowing teachers: Since a majority of the inhabitants of Mewat area are Meo Muslims with Urdu as their mother tongue they wanted Urdu to be taught.

Having identified the causes, the next step was to launch an enrolment campaign. An enrolment incentive scheme was evolved whereby the panchayats doing the best enrolment work in a block would be given three cash awards of Rs. 10,000, Rs. 7,500 and Rs. 5,000. These awards were to be met from the allocation of about Rs. 24,000 made to the panchayat samiti for promotion of educational programmes. It was so far used as grants to influential panchayats for construction of rooms in schools.

The institution of awards was followed by a mass contact programme in which all development and education officers and panchayats were involved besides the sub divisional officers (civil) and the collector. It was implemented in four blocks of Mewat area from September 1 to September 30, 1980. In just one month 37 per cent increase was recorded in the enrolment of children of the age group six to eleven. There was 100 per cent increase in 33 panchayats. In 1981, the operation was extended to the whole of the district and an increase of about 20 per cent was recorded all over the district.

Once the community had responded to the call of enrolment, efforts were made to provide the schools, with buildings and teachers. Of the 450 primary schools in the Gurgaon district about 330 were run either partly or fully in open. The buildings housing the schools themselves were inadequate and in a bad shape.

The primary school buildings are normally constructed by the panchayats with their own funds or public donations. But, in the Gurgaon district, the general condition of the panchayats is poor and funds cannot easily be raised. As the problem was identified, it was found, 141 schools had no buildings, 94 needed additional rooms, 74 repairs, 24 boundary walls and 145 water taps or hand-pumps for drinking water. The exercise involved identification of resources not only at the district or block level but at the village level, including people's capacity to donate money. The plans with most economical specifications were got prepared from the engineering staff of the panchayat bodies and the whole programme was implemented with the close coordination of education and panchayat departments. A committee was constituted to supervise the



execution of works. The technical supervision was entrusted to the block junior engineer and the subdivisonal officer (panchayat and food for work programme) under the overall administrative supervision of the BDO. The sub divisional officer (civil) kept a close watch over the programme and reported to the collector regularly. The progress was reviewed every month at the sub divisional level by the sub divisional officer (civil) and at the district level by the collector.

The programme was launched in October 1981 and in a year it was completed. During its execution the costs went up to Rs. 1,09,00,000 and the additional sum required was also mobilized locally.

A great challenge to the programme came from the Asian games which claimed all the available cement, bricks and other building materials of the entire region to construct stadia on warfooting. Stone was available in plenty in the district and the buildings were so planned as to be constructed with stones and lime from the local market.

It is therefore proved that a massive programme which requires mobilisation of resources and manpower of enormous magnitude can successfully be implemented if the collector has the will. In one or two places sites selected for the buildings were matters of dispute which were settled by mediation. Today, in the entire district there is not a single school which does not have a building.

Hedges were raised in place of the boundary wall which in view of its cost ranging from 60 to 70 thousand rupees was unthinkable for schools which could not even be provided with adequate roof. A hedge costing only Rs. 400 was planted by the forest department for each of the 80 schools selected where the availability of water was found reasonably sufficient.

#### *Establishment of English Medium Schools*

A poor district, Gurgaon lacked good quality English medium schools. In Gurgaon city with a population of one lakh, there was only one convent school which was not able to cope with the increasing demand for admission. The elite of the town were particularly annoyed with the over-bearing attitude of the school authorities towards the admission seekers.

Therefore, with the help of the local rotary club, a rotary educational and service trust was established. The task of setting up the English school was entrusted to a highly competent principal. The Haryana Urban Development Authority was requested to allot a five-room primary school building in a sector where no house had been constructed till then. The response of the people was so overwhelming that almost 800 children had to be admitted to the school in the very first year despite the fairly high fee and the day boarding charges. The number of rooms of the school went up to 32 in almost a year.

Encouraged by the success of rotary public school experiment, it was decided to start two English medium schools at the headquarters of two sub-divisions Nuh and Ferozepur Jhirka which are chronically backward mainly on account of the lack of facilities for education. They have two bal bhawans for creative hobbies for children after school hours, the buildings of which were in use only for three hours in the evening. These buildings were therefore, improvised for running two schools in the morning with the funds made available by the district child welfare council from March, 1982. The response of the people, even in the rural areas, was extremely encouraging. Each school had a strength of 150 students in the first year.

### *Library on Bicycle*

The rural areas are shockingly deficient in reading material with the result that school going children and literate adults have no access to knowledge and information whatsoever. The establishment of a library in each village will require massive funds. A rural library service called "library on bicycle" was organised on experimental basis in Gurgaon block to cover eight villages within a radius of 10-12 kms. every week. Against a membership fee of paise 25 members were enrolled and membership in the villages ranged between 200 and 450. The books were provided by the district library on loan. The only recurring expenditure was Rs. 500 towards the salary of the librarian and some cost of book binding. Later on, a book bank was established with the gifts of old books and magazines by schools and other institutions. An appeal for

public donations yielded within two days over Rs. 6,000.

The success of the project at Gurgaon has led to its initiation in the backward block of Ferozepur Jhirka. As mentioned earlier every block in Haryana has a grant of Rs. 24,000 which can easily be used for library on bicycle.

### *Social Welfare*

The problem of health-care in rural areas has engaged the attention of planners for a long time. The cost inputs involved are so high that even the basic minimum health-care according to the allopathic system cannot be promised before the beginning of the next century. Cheap and effective, the homeopathic system of medicine is found ideally suited for Indian conditions. In the last two years 22 homeopathic dispensaries all over the district were set up. The deputy commissioner is the *ex officio* chairman of the committee for running the dispensaries.

The social workers involved in the project were asked to form a homeopathic council under the Red Cross for the purpose of opening such dispensaries in rural areas. By donations and grants Rs. 20,000 was collected. A council is formed mainly to establish, maintain, manage and supervise homeopathic dispensaries in the district and to educate the people with simple laws of health, thus raising the standard of the nation's health. The chairman of the executive committee of the council is the deputy commissioner. The council has opened its branch in each sub-division under the aegis of the sub-divisional officer.

The dispensaries have become popular, and the daily average of patients is more than 100. The total number of patients in the district who visited these dispensaries from April, 1981 to December, 1982 was about three lakh.

### *Collection of Funds*

The dispensaries are run by public donations. The panchayats, municipal committees, market committees, panchayat samitis, district red cross and Mewat development board have made their contributions. Aids also have been extended from the ministers' discretionary grant scheme and

the matching grant scheme. Already a sum of Rs. 6 lakh has been raised.

A board of doctors once a month visits every dispensary of which accounts, stocks and working are inspected. A donor has given four acres of land worth Rs. 12 lakh for starting a homeopathic medical college and hospital. The recurring cost of the college and hospital will only be approximately Rs. 3 lakh which will be raised locally.

### *Project to Fight Eye Diseases*

In order to control blindness in the district a project was formulated by the district red cross society with the help of Dr. Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, New Delhi. The major objectives of the project are:

1. to prevent blindness due to malnutrition and infections in rural areas by strengthening the ophthalmic care services in all the existing primary health centres and sub-centres;
2. to clear the backlog of cataract by involving voluntary organizations to build low cost hospitals in the rural areas to achieve the target of 8 to 10 eye beds per 1,00,000 population;
3. to ensure that eye care services reach in remote areas, as an extension of services from the local base hospitals; and
4. to develop a "model rehabilitation scheme for the blind and visually handicapped" in their own surroundings.

### *Plan of Action*

A six dimensional plan of action was visualised to reduce the incidence of blindness from 1.5 per cent to 0.5 per cent. It consists of:

1. survey;
2. health education on eye care;
3. ophthalmic services;
4. training of medical and para medical personnel;
5. continuous monitoring and evaluation; and
6. rehabilitation of the blind.

For the implementation of the project a philanthropist donated a building costing Rs. 25 lakh for a 40-bed eye hospital at Pataudi. Another gift was a building that can accommodate ten beds. The number of eye operation camps has increased from 7 in 1980 to 18 in 1982. The number of eye operations performed has also gone up from 800 to over 2000.

The achievements in the educational and health sectors demonstrate that despite the erosion of power and authority, the collector can still play a major role in improving the lot of the people of his district. He is, in other words, for social objectives as powerful and effective as he chooses to be. Pioneering work was done in many other fields as well, without much hindrances.

# *Role of Collector in District Administration with Particular Reference to Development*

*V. Chandralekha*

An ignorant villager may not know anything of the Constitution of the country, but he views the collector as the kingpin of district administration, a symbol of authority and a living reality to him. Individuals of all walks of life approach the collector for redressing their grievances and seeking remedies for their problems. The ideals of democracy, can be realised only through impartial, honest and efficient administration. An administrator should be neutral in politics and serve faithfully any political party in power. He should possess the ability to get along with the people, have qualities of leadership and develop the art of getting along with politicians.

## *Role of District Administration*

Public administration carries out functions which are vital to the very existence of the people such as maintenance of law and order, supply of essential commodities, and provision of housing and clothing. Environmental factors particularly social, affect public administration a great deal. With the great advancement of science and technology the problems of maintaining an effective link between the administration and the rest of the community, is of great importance. The success or failure of the government will always depend upon the quality of public administration.

In India, efficiency of the administration means the efficiency of the district administration, because it is the district

administration that comes into direct contact with the people. As the captain of the team of district officials, the collector has to coordinate the different departmental units to prevent duplication, overlapping and waste. The collector of a district should provide good leadership. His self-possession, impartiality and objectivity are the important guiding factors to ensure the successful team work at the district level.

### *Origin and Evolution of District Administration*

The power of the officials under the bureaucratic system constitutes a threat to the liberties of the people. Harold J. Laski has defined bureaucracy as "a system of government, the control of which is so completely in the hands of officials, that their power jeopardises the liberties of ordinary citizens. The characteristics of such a regime are a passion for routine in administration, the sacrifice of flexibility to rule, delay in making decisions and a refusal to embark upon experiment".

The district officer wielded immense power for a long time in the past. He ruled autocratically and nobody could interfere in his work. He was the virtual monarch of the district. The Montagu-Chelmsford report summed up his position thus : "The district officer has a dual capacity; as collector, he is head of the revenue organisation, and as magistrate, he exercises general supervision over the inferior courts and in particular police work. In areas where there is no permanent revenue settlement, he can at any time be in touch with, through his revenue subordinates every inch of his territory. Several other specialised services exist with staffs of their own. But in varying degrees, the district officer influences the policy in all these matters and he is always there, in the background to lend his support or if need be to mediate between specialised civil service and the people".

The collector during the British period was answerable only to the board of revenue and government. In the Madras province, Regulation II of 1803 was passed defining the authority conferred on collectors and for describing the modes of procedure required in the discharge of their duties. Collectors were "declared to have authority to superintend and control, under the orders of the board of revenue, all persons

employed in the executive administration of the public revenue, all zamindars, or proprietors of land paying revenue, and all farmers securities, raiyats or other persons concerned in, or responsible for any part of revenue to government as far as the said superintendence and control may relate to the executive administration of the revenue under regulations now enacted or to be hereafter enacted”.

The primary duty of the collector was the collection of revenue and it is this function that gave him the designation of ‘collector’. But his work as collector differed in different provinces according to the system of collection of land revenue and local circumstances. Ramsay Macdonald has rightly pointed out that “he is the eye of the government and its tongue. He has to keep his finger on the pulse of his district, and nothing of any importance is supposed to happen without his knowledge. A sparrow ought not to fall without the incident coming to his ears”.

As an illustrious former civil servant aptly pointed out: “the capacity of a civilian’s mental power should be similar to that of the elephants trunk, which can pick up a pin and pull down a mighty forest tree. There is nothing too great and hardly anything too small to which he may not in the course of his career be expected to apply himself.”

The control of the collector by the authorities above was very light, as it could not be effectively exercised due to the barriers of distance. The result was that the discretion of the district officer remained intact. Even if any appeal is preferred before higher authorities, they supported only the stand of the subordinate, the underlying idea being that the strength of a chain lies in giving attention to its weakest link. They thought that if the authority of the district officer was undermined, confidence of lower rungs of bureaucracy will be eroded. The supervising officers by and large remained at the headquarters on account of the poor transport facilities to cover long distances.

The bureaucracy received a great encouragement in India during the British regime. The bureaucrat who reached the position of district collector through the sluggish promotion channel imbibed a love for routine and red tape.



Since independence, there has been considerable writing and speaking on the role of the collector. The collector who was formerly a symbol of state power has now become a symbol of service under the new dispensation. His role has now become complex. He has always to reckon with the local representatives of the party in power. Otherwise he may get into difficulties. Some collectors wisely take the line of least resistance and mark their time. After the introduction of panchayat raj, the collector has to deal with a horde of non-officials, many of whom are influential politicians.

As observed by V.T. Krishnamachari "The collector's role has changed but not diminished for he now has the function of guiding democratic bodies. Often he has to carry conviction with members of democratic institutions". Though the position of the collector has undergone a change, he still remains the head of general administration and the representative of the government in his district. Administrative efficiency is largely the contribution of his energy, skill, tact and resourcefulness and the accomplishment of the work of his subordinates to a great extent depends upon the inspiring example he sets for them.

The collector is the principal coordinator of the development programme of the district. With his administrative experience, he plays a dominant role in the realisation of the objectives of panchayat raj and rural development. As the leader of the team of officials of development departments, the collector has to ensure that the development targets are achieved within the time frame to the general satisfaction of the people.

The community development movement is to bring about a psychological revolution among the villagers to improve their standards of living by their own cooperative efforts. According to the decision of the planning commission some 5000 blocks were set up in the country, each consisting of about 100 villages. Each block was to be a unit of planning and development and to have an integrated programme of rural development. Hence at the block level, the various departmental agencies were to be integrated. A team of extension officers from the various departments such as agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, public works, rural industry,

irrigation, education, social education and women's education headed by the BDO was constituted. No development department was to function independently at the block level. At the village level, a functionary called village level worker (VLW) was also created to function under the guidance of all the extension officers and deal with all the problems of the villagers.

To what extent did this first experiment of integrated development administration as against departmental system of administration succeed? In retrospect it would appear that the departmental forces were never reconciled from the very outset to the "integrated approach". The departments on the whole seemed to reject it and their rejection mechanism operated in many ways. First, the departments refused to allocate any funds to an area covered by the community development blocks. As the block prepared its budget, the departmental funds were withdrawn. Second, the district officers in the initial years refused to take responsibility for the performance of the block organisation. They started practically treating the existing officers of the block as being outside the departmental set-up. Third, the department of agriculture disowned the VLW in spite of the fact that the integrated area programme laid overwhelming emphasis on agricultural extension. They kept on insisting that the VLW was no good as compared to the field assistant, though the VLW, was systematically trained for two years at rural development training centres whose instructors were drawn from the agricultural department. Ultimately, the department of agriculture succeeded in making the VLW a purely agricultural functionary rather than a multi-purpose worker, thanks to the recommendations of the Ram Subhag Singh committee. Other changes also followed which tended to weaken the authority of the BDO over the departmental officers who started looking more and more to the compliance of departmental instructions and feeling that they had no obligation towards a common programme of block development. The situation as it stands appears to indicate that the concept of area integrated-development has been given a go-bye and what is being carried on is the separate and independent implementation of the individual departmental schemes by the departmental officers.

### *Area Development Authority*

In spite of the setback received to the area development approach in course of the experiment of community development programme, the need for such an approach was again felt in different contexts. In recent years, the full and speedy utilisation of the irrigation potentials under major irrigation projects has not been found possible in the absence of the integrated command area development plan. During the fifth five year plan, therefore, command area development authority (CADA) has been set up for each of the 55 major irrigation projects in the country. Similarly, for the drought prone area in some 70 districts in the country, the need for integrated approach has arisen and hence recently drought prone area development authority (DPADA) has been set up for some of these districts to implement an eight sector drought area programme covering irrigation, soil conservation, afforestation, horticulture, dairy, fishery, sericulture and cooperation.

The integrated area approach in the programme is also found necessary for small and marginal farmers in selected districts. Again thus an attempt has been made to set up area development authorities, and the departmental authorities are brought under the umbrella of an integrated agency. To what extent have these new experiments been successful?

### *Experiences of Area Approach*

For all districts in which small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers (MFAL) development programmes have been introduced, new organisations called the Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) or MFAL development agencies have been constituted as registered societies. The divisional and district officers of the concerned department like agriculture, cooperation, animal husbandry, public works, etc., are the members of the governing councils of the authorities which are headed by the divisional commissioner or the deputy commissioner. The rejection mechanism, which led to the decisive defeat of the area integrated approach in the community development programme has also operated in cases of the programmes of the SFDA and MFAL. The administrative machinery created for the new programme was rather small.

Only one project officer with a couple of specialists and limited clerical staff was provided for each agency. It was assured that the entire strength of the various departments would be at their back. But in reality the entire burden was left on the shoulders of the project officer alone with little active involvement of the departments. This led to inordinate delay and slackness in the implementation of the programmes. Instead of an all round effort to improve the conditions of the small farmer through every possible organisational means, the programmes were limited to the specific items covered by the SFDA projects, viz., providing subsidies and risk funds. Thus departmentalism came in the way of realisation of the goals of the SFDA and MFAL programmes.

Some difficulties have also cropped up in the DPADA programmes. The departments have tended to take instructions from their departmental heads, bypassing the governing council of the DPADA. In a hurry to spend the departmental share of funds, the heads of departments have sometimes given instructions for the purchase of the machinery far in excess of the actual requirements. Specialist visitors have tended to pass on their opinions and guidance to their juniors at the project level rather than placing them before the governing council. Thus the programmes have contributed to departmental expansionism without achieving the main objective, viz., the coordination of efforts of various departments towards the restoration of the ecological balance in the area by the fullest utilisation and mobilisation of soil and water resources available there. Each department tends to promote its own scheme without caring for the inter-programme integration.

CADAs have been set up in the command areas. A limited budget has been placed at the disposal of the authorities with the expectation that it would be supplemented by the resources of the department. But this seldom happens; nor has there been an adequate appreciation of the need for the various departments to work together as a team for speedy and effective irrigation development. The public works department officers continue to be bothered about the engineering aspect to the neglect of agricultural side.

*Ailment and Remedy*

In the initial phase, planning in a federal set-up did not pose any major problems. The states have started demanding from the Centre more generous allocations of resources. They have also started questioning the legitimacy of central and centrally sponsored schemes pertaining to the items falling within their sphere of administration. Changes of political parties also played its part in losing its importance. The politicians at the state level started looking at panchayat raj institutions as rival centres of power.

The team of officials of the block was drafted from the development departments designed to have a unified approach which however was stopped at the block level itself. At the block level, the extension team would have done better, had the departmental officers acted as expected of them. They had their own departmental prejudices, intra-departmental and inter-departmental rivalries. Organisational cohesion was wanting in many of them. The highways and rural development department has created many wings such as national highways, rural roads and sugarcane development, each functioning in its own style. Similarly in public works department, there is no cohesion among its various wings like buildings, special projects and irrigation. The same is the case with all other major development departments which have to play an important role in the rural development programmes. The lack of coordination within the development departments made it difficult to set up an agency for coordination of their operations at the district level which together with its reflection on the block personnel contributed to the poor performance of the block and perhaps the disintegration of the block organization. Coordination was a problem from the beginning and the attempts for the unified approach did not go beyond the block. Now the block organization is bereft of its original shape, vitality and purpose.

Should the departments be allowed to have their own way without bothering about integrated area development? The need for integrated approach will not diminish but increase in course of time. The principle of integration is indispensable to improve the life of the community. In this context a fresh look at the structure of the development department

is necessary. The panchayat and development department in Tamil Nadu should be headed by a commissioner in the grade of chief secretary to government, who should also be vice-chairman of the state planning commission. All directors and heads of technical departments dealing with community development programme should work under his direction and control.

The collector as the head of the district, has to play a dominant role in the implementation of development programmes for which he should be given the necessary authority and status. Senior members of the IAS may be appointed as district collectors. They will have both rich administrative experience and full command over the district and subordinate officers. When C. Rajagopalachari was chief minister of the Madras state, very senior IAS officers functioned as collectors and they contributed much to the efficiency of the district administration. The elected representatives who are on the DDC, the panchayat union or panchayat may be brought into the fold of development programmes for their successful implementation through popular participation. The DDC of which the collector is the chairman is at present only an advisory body. The collector can be made the executive head to implement the schemes and programmes drawn up by the DDC answerable only to the vice-chairman and state development commissioner.

The block should function as the second tier of the three-tier panchayat raj. The BDO should be the head of the team of extension officers. These changes would help realistic planning and implementation of the development schemes. A cohesive administrative set-up for the panchayat raj and rural development has to be evolved. Secondly, as the civil service is subject to the appropriate political authority, so administration at the district and block levels also be brought under it.

# *Role of Collector in Gujarat: Need for a Reappraisal*

*Sanjiv Misra*

In recent times, the main focus of district administration has indisputably shifted away from the collection of revenue and the maintenance of law and order to economic development and the upliftment of the weaker sections of society. The role of the collector in Gujarat state, who formally remains the representative of the government in the district, however intriguingly continues more or less the same as in the old colonial days. Thus the collector in Gujarat is still essentially a revenue and law and order official. This is despite the fact that many of the revenue and magisterial functions which he performs, have lost the importance that they had during the British rule under which the primary concern of the district administration was the collection of land revenue and the maintenance of law and order.

With the exception perhaps of Maharashtra, the role of the collector in Gujarat can scarcely be said to be representative of the rest of the country. With the changing emphasis of district administration, his role is to a greater or lesser degree adapted towards development objectives since in most states collectors are actively involved in planning and implementation of development programmes. In Gujarat, however, the peculiar pattern of administrative evolution has led to a deep cleavage between the revenue and law-and-order, and development functions at the district level. The acceptance of the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee on democratic decentralisation and the establishment of panchayat raj institutions in the district created a vertical split in the district administrative set-up. The task of development



administration in the district is entrusted to a three-tier representative structure with the district panchayat as the apex body. The post of the district development officer, was created to be filled by an officer of the IAS in the senior time scale and equal to the collector in rank. The district development officer while being the administrative head of the development machinery in the district, is, also the secretary of the representative district panchayat.

Although still the collector, is theoretically the administrative head of the district, he has been divested of any effective role in the development administration of the district. The district development officer being his equal, is in no way under the control of the collector. Consequently, the entire development machinery in the district is placed outside the pale of the collector's authority. The influence, if any, that he continues to exercise in development matters is largely arising from the status and prestige of his office. The collector therefore, remains primarily a regulatory functionary greatly occupied with routine functions, and crucial matters like monitoring and review of development programmes which concern the welfare of society as a whole, do not strictly come within the purview of his jurisdiction.

The preoccupation of the collector with routine work implies an underutilisation of his managerial capacity which is in great demand in the field of development. It also implies that his administrative experience is hardly applied to solve the real problems of the majority of the people such as poverty, unemployment, and satisfaction of minimum needs. The collector is ideally placed to perform the role of coordination of development activities rapidly proliferating in the district.

The involvement of the collector in development administration would not only make his role more meaningful and satisfying, but also the district level coordination more effective. If the collector is to bear the responsibilities of development, his traditional role of a preserver of the *status quo* should yield to that of a dynamic agent of change. He should be relieved of routine revenue and magisterial functions in order to afford him more time to concentrate on the real problems of human welfare in the district. The recent inclusion



of the collector in district planning has been a very welcome step since it has brought him into direct contact with the multifarious aspects of development administration. However, saddled as he is with routine functions, it is somewhat difficult for him to do justice to the planning and monitoring functions, which he is now required to perform as the vice-chairman of the district planning board.

In order to relieve the collector of the pressure of routine work a district revenue officer should be appointed for such functions as survey settlement, maintenance of records, remission and suspension of land revenue, and quasi-judicial case work in the form of appeals against the orders of subordinate revenue officers. He could also be designated as district registrar for discharging the duties under the Stamp Act.

The routine magisterial functions of the district magistrate could be handed over to the additional district magistrate to be independently discharged by him. Some of such functions are :

- (a) appointment, removal, suspension, etc., of police patels (an anachronistic village functionary quite irrelevant at present);
- (b) all functions of the district magistrate as entertainment tax collector;
- (c) all matters relating to the regulation and control of cinema houses except the grant of no objection certificates for setting up cinemas and suspension or cancellation of cinema licences; and
- (d) administration of the explosives manual, Petroleum Act, etc.

The collector should undertake only such touring as necessary for monitoring and inspection of programmes, which are directly concerned with the welfare of the people. During his village visits, the collector should mainly attend to the review of the work done relating to the supply of drinking water, antyodaya schemes, house sites for the landless, rural electrification, village roads, afforestation, family welfare, agricultural programmes, etc. Such visits will give him an important feedback regarding the implementation of various development

programmes in the district. This feedback will enable him to discharge effectively the planning and monitoring functions in his capacity as the vice-chairman of the district planning board.

If the village visit of the collector is to be used for developmental goals, it will be essential to relieve him of the routine revenue inspection and audit of the village records, for which it is now utilised. It may be a convincing argument that nothing prevents the collector from looking into the developmental activities while carrying out the village revenue inspection but it will be difficult for him to find adequate time to both the functions especially when the traditional emphasis of his visit is on revenue inspection. In order to find more time for the collector to look into the developmental side the audit of the village records must invariably be left to the lower revenue functionaries.

There is of course a fear that actively involving the collector in development activities may bring him in conflict with the panchayat institutions which have been entrusted with the implementation of most of the development programmes. Such a fear is unfounded since no transfer of power or functions from the panchayat institutions is contemplated by the new arrangements. The collector will be mainly concerned with planning, coordination, monitoring and reviewing of development programmes and not with the details and modalities of their implementation. There is, therefore, no question of any conflict. On the contrary, the collector would be in a position to actively assist the implementing agencies of development programmes.

It is argued that "as the representative of the government in the district, the collector is expected to concern himself with all aspects of the district administration not merely revenue and law and order. There is, therefore, nothing which prevents him from performing a dynamic role in respect of development programmes if he has the required initiative. After all, he is the chairman of so many committees which concern themselves with virtually every conceivable activity in the district. All that is required is a positive attitude on the part of the collector and a proper management of his time".

This argument though apparently convincing, is only partially valid. In bureaucratic organisations, it is always necessary to formalise and institutionalise the role which a functionary is required to play. To institutionalise and formalise the new role which the collector would be expected to play, it would be extremely necessary to designate him as *ex officio* joint development commissioner in the way as he has been designated as *ex officio* joint commissioner of industries.

This may avert some of the undesirable consequences of the sharp dichotomy between the panchayat and revenue departments in the present day district administration. It is not suggested that the revenue machinery should be involved in the implementation of development programmes. However, due to the division between revenue and development matters it does not seem to have even the minimum necessary involvement regarding development activities. As a result, a mamlatdar (tahsildar) normally does not make inquiries about the assistance being given to antyodaya families or the progress made in the minimum needs programme during his visits to the village. Nor he is in a position to entertain representations on the subject as they do not concern his department. With the active involvement of the collector in matters relating to development, the subordinate revenue officers may keep themselves well acquainted with the progress of development activities within their respective jurisdictions.

There is thus a strong case for actively involving the collector in development matters which form the main thrust of today's administration. Apart from making his role much more creative and meaningful, it will also contribute to the strength of the institutions of local democracy. After all the government in a welfare state aims at something much more than land revenue and law and order.

# *Implementation of Decentralised Planning at the District Level*

*Achal Kumar Joti*

The concept of the district level planning has been drawing attention since the second five year plan. With the introduction of the panchayat raj in Gujarat in 1963 certain powers as also a number of district level schemes were transferred to the district panchayat along with funds and personnel.

In pursuance of the adopted policy of the government to decentralise the planning process and to develop grassroots level planning, funds were made available in the past to associate the district panchayat in the formulation of plans. However, this did not give satisfactory results for a variety of reasons. Besides, insofar as the formulation of annual plans is concerned, there has hardly been any concrete efforts made for integrated planning at the district level. In the fourth and fifth five year plans, the district planning boards were asked to formulate proposals for district level schemes within certain financial ceiling fixed for them. In 1978-83, five year plan proposals were called for from all districts for district level schemes with a view to integrating them in the state's plan within the broad frame of the state policy and democracy and for the fulfilment of the requirements of the local areas. However, judged by their impact on the local people and the degree of enthusiasm kindled in them, none of these schemes can be considered to have been much of a success. Local participation was at low key and totally disappointing.

It was against this background that the government of Gujarat, thought of a new bold step towards decentralisation. This step consisted in placing 20 per cent of the funds earmarked for district level schemes at the disposal of the

district planning boards and giving them the discretion to propose schemes of local importance against that outlay.

District planning boards have a varied representative character. The chairman of the board was until recently the collector but now he is a minister of the state government. The collector is made the vice-chairman. All members of Parliament and all members of the legislative assembly, hailing from the district, the district panchayat president, two or three taluka panchayat presidents, the mayor and the commissioner of the municipal corporation, the president of the municipality, the president of one town (nagar) panchayat, the chairman of the district central cooperative bank and a representative of the lead bank are its members. In order to make available to the district planning board expert advice, a suitable member from a research institution or university is included in it. For dealing with the problems of weaker sections properly and adequately, it has recently been decided to appoint the chairman of the social justice committee as a member of the board.

The other members of the board are the district development officer and the project officer, of the tribal area sub-plan. The member-secretary, is a district planning officer, who is a state service class I officer and additional member secretary is the district statistical officer. One of the non-officials of the state planning board is nominated to the district planning board. The functions of the district planning board are: to prepare perspective plan, five year plan and annual plan of the district for its balanced development; to evolve specific schemes in various fields; to ensure that the planning is realistic and aims at maximum participation; to undertake a regular and effective review and evaluation of the implementation of the district level schemes and programmes; to undertake special monitoring and evaluation of the minimum needs programme; to locate the bottlenecks in the implementation of schemes and remove them, to detect the missing links in the infrastructure for implementation of the family-oriented programme and to formulate appropriate schemes to restore the links; to review the progress of the implementation of family-oriented programmes in the district, and to ensure that their benefits actually accrue to the rural poor.

The district planning board has been given powers to allocate resources not exceeding Rs. 10 lakh for any one developmental project. It has also been laid down that as far as possible funds should adequately be allocated to the minimum needs programme and to the schemes for the benefit of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

The district planning board has an executive committee. The collector is its chairman and the district panchayat president is its co-chairman. The district planning officer is its member-secretary and the district statistical officer is its additional member-secretary. Besides the district development officer, two or three state legislators are its members.

The committee meets every month and monitors the implementation of the schemes sanctioned by the district planning board, and watches the progress of the minimum needs programme in the district. It has to secure the support required for the employment generation programme in the district and provide finance for it from the district plan funds. The district planning board has a special committee to monitor the household programme and coordinate the activities of different participating agencies. The district planning board has been provided with a small complement of staff headed by the district planning officer who works under the direct supervision of the collector.

The district planning officer is expected to tour and visit the sites of the projects financed by the district planning board. The district planning board is also expected to build up a reference library on economic development besides acquiring publications of the planning commission and the state government. It has been instructed to set up task-forces for the following subjects:

- (a) agricultural and allied services including cooperation and irrigation;
- (b) small and cottage industries;
- (c) primary education, adult education, rural health services, rural water supply scheme, rural housing, environmental improvement in slum areas, and social services with nutrition; and

- (d) development of basic infrastructure such as rural electrification, storage and roads.

The new decentralised district planning was inaugurated on November 14, 1980. It has generated popular enthusiasm all over the district. The people have come to feel that they are participants in planning and that they can propose and get things executed.

What has made the difference between decentralised planning and the earlier planning process is the delegation of powers to the collector and the devolution of funds. The people see the district planning board as an effective body which will execute their accepted suggestions or proposals. The decentralised district planning board took up the job of preparing proposals and considering them in great earnest by the end of March, 1981. No less than 1600 projects were proposed by the 19 district planning boards against the discretionary outlay and about 500 projects against the incentive outlay. District panchayats and other implementing agencies enthusiastically took up the implementation of the projects.

The best proof of popular enthusiasm is the contribution raised against the incentive outlay. During the period of 1980-81, nearly Rs. 3.77 crore was raised. The eagerness of the public to raise contribution can be judged by the fact that in one district when on March 15, 1981, the collector, under the deadline set by the financial rules, made a move to surrender some of the incentive outlay against which no contribution had been received, the popular representatives started a campaign and within a space of a week raised the requisite popular contribution.

# *People's Participation in Development Process at District, Block and Grassroots Levels*

*Noorjahan Bava*

After three decades of planned development, India's population growth has touched the staggering figure of over 683 million of which 50 per cent lives below the poverty line. The fruits of development have obviously not reached those sections of society for whom development was planned. Further, the gap between promise and performance, between goals set and targets achieved has widened and imbalances between persons and regions have increased. It is a sad commentary on the performance on the part of all those who are directly or indirectly concerned with the administration of development in general and integrated rural development programmes (IRDP) in particular. The central objectives of development planning, viz., economic growth with social justice are still a far cry. The post-mortem operations currently being performed on the Indian political economy and society are bound to pinpoint the utter lack of people's involvement in the development process as the villain of the piece.

In their attempt to establish an egalitarian social order, the founding fathers of the Constitution of India hit upon a paradigm of development which gave the pride of place to public participation in the development process. It is both a unique and a very difficult model of development exuding as it does, the idealism of the national freedom movement, the democratic liberalism of the west and the socialism of the Soviet Union. It is unique because India is perhaps the only nation in the Third World to experiment with development



through democracy while her Afro-Asian neighbours have chosen the totalitarian path. It is difficult because it sought to transform a vast, highly stratified, caste-ridden, poverty-stricken people steeped in ignorance, superstition and misery into a modern dynamic and developed nation through peaceful democratic means.

### *Participation—Development Nexus*

A close nexus exists between the administration of development and participation of the people in the development process. People's participation is the building block of development administration which is change oriented, goal oriented and people's participation oriented; it is the *sine qua non* for the success of development programmes and projects. The attainment of development goals like nation-building, industrialization, self-sufficiency in food production, modernization, realization of true democracy, economic growth, social justice and cultural development, hinges upon public participation in development tasks and activities. While participation is both a goal and a means of development, decentralization—political and administrative is the means of ensuring people's participation in democratic development. As Maddick observes, "there is a triangular relationship between decentralization, democracy and development."<sup>1</sup> In short, it is people's participation that acts as control mechanism against the so-called tyranny of the bureaucracy, as an instrument for ensuring the legitimacy, stability and strength of the government and above all as an effective means for ensuring the viability, effectiveness and equity of developmental programmes.

### *People's Participation: Some Conceptual and Operational Issues*

People's participation is a powerful weapon in the armoury of planners, policy makers, administrators and members of Parliament. However, neither has it been clearly conceptualized nor operationalized as to facilitate its quantitative measurement. This has given rise to a lot of confusion and conflicting

<sup>1</sup>Henry Maddick, *Democracy, Decentralization and Development*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1963, pp. 73-87.

interpretations. One finds that the terms 'citizen', 'public' and 'people' are used inter-changeably in development literature and discussions. According to Soysal, the term citizen, when used synonymously with 'public' refers to a group with common interest that is affected by the actions and policies of public administration and whose opinions and responses in their turn influence the administration.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that 'public' is not a homogeneous entity but heterogeneous groups with conflicting interests. There is not one 'public' but many 'publics'. In the rural developmental context, the term refers to the 'target group' such as the small farmers, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. In the case of the small farmers development programmes, it denotes the 'beneficiaries', the clientele of the particular development programme. It does not denote the administrators or bureaucrats who implement the programmes.

Likewise the term 'participation' is no less an easy term to define or operationalize or measure. It is an action-oriented term calling for drive, will and skill on the part of the participant public. Broadly speaking it refers to the role of members of the general public as distinct from appointed officials.<sup>3</sup>

People's participation may take many forms simple or sophisticated; it may be direct or indirect; political, or administrative; social (institutional) or medial; or the awareness, acceptance and adoption of new technology in various sectors of development such as modern agricultural technology by farmers or contribution by people in cash and kind (voluntary labour, donation of land, building etc.); or the role of voluntary organizations, or it may take the form of consultation or cooperation or association.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Mumtaz Soysal, *Public Relations in Administration II: The Influence of the Public on the Operation of Public Administration*, Brussels, International Institute of Administrative Sciences, 1966, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>*Decentralization for National and Local Development*, UN, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>The author's doctoral thesis on the subject is an attempt to bridge this yawning gap in the body of knowledge on this crucial dimension of development administration. Responding to the call of the Indian

(Continued on next page)

In operational terms, people's participation in the formulation phase of the decision-making process involves two dimensions—institutional (social) and media participation. The former indicates the participation by the target group, members of Parliament, panchayat raj institutions, enlightened citizens, political parties, pressure groups, youth forums, farmers organisations, universities, voluntary organizations and other social forces in articulating the needs and demands of the local public before planners and policy-makers and preparation of the development plans, programmes and projects based on the felt needs of the people. Since this kind of participation has to take place within an institutional framework like Parliament, state legislature or panchayat raj bodies, it is termed as institutional or what rural sociologists call 'social participation'. Since sound decision-making depends on availability of timely and relevant data and information, public participation at this stage of decision-making also includes media participation (exposure to modern media). On the other hand, public participation in the implementation of development programmes, for all operational purpose involves the following:

1. awareness, acceptance and adoption of modern technology in the appropriate field of development;
2. utilization of institutional credit and other service organizations operating in the field; and
3. contribution by the public in the form of cash or voluntary labour, property, etc., to the developmental activities.

*(Continued from previous page)*

Council of Social Science Research, the above study has evolved and applied a model of farmer's (public) participation in agricultural development administration in Tiruchirappalli and Ramanathapuram districts of Tamil Nadu. In this empirical study the term 'public participation' is defined as participation of citizen farmers in the various phases of decision-making process, viz., formulation, implementation and evaluation of agricultural development programmes at the village, block and district levels. Noorjahan Bava, *People's Participation in Development Administration: An Empirical Study of Two Districts in Tamil Nadu*, New Delhi, Uppal Book Publishers, 1984.

People's participation in development cannot be complete unless and until they are involved in the evaluation of developmental plans and programmes. In operational terms participation at the evaluation stage of the decision-making process may take the form of: (1) discussions/studies/seminars on plan performance by development agencies, voluntary bodies, universities, research institutions, youth forums and political parties and forwarding their suggestions and views to the authorities concerned, and (2) media participation.

### *Some Vital Determinants of Participation*

Another major issue of conceptual and operational significance to development administrators is the question relating to the determinants of participation. The nature and extent of people's participation in the development process are determined to a very large extent by certain sociological and political factors. These act as independent variables. They include amongst other, participant's age, education, caste, size of land holding, size of family, extent of unemployment, indebtedness, political awareness, political consciousness, interest, party affiliation, vigorous exercise of one's civil and political rights and so on. Statistically significant and high correlation—positive in the case of some variables and negative in the case of others with participation are found to exist by many studies particularly in agricultural development administration. The findings of such studies are very useful to our planners and policy makers on the issue of how best people's involvement can be harnessed for development.<sup>5</sup>

### *India's Rural Development (Sans People's Participation)*

India has launched her massive programmes of socio-economic development since 1950s with a view to lift her teeming millions from the scourges of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, ignorance and disease, and to give them a dignified human life. The community development and extension service programmes of the fifties, the establishment of the three-tier institutions of panchayat raj or democratic decentralization at

<sup>5</sup>Noorjahan Bava, *op. cit.*, Chapter V.

the district, block and village levels in the states in the sixties, the centrally sponsored programmes like the Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP), Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP), SFDA, Tribal Development Programme (TDP) and the launching of the IRDP in the seventies—all have failed to usher in the long awaited egalitarian social order in which there will be economic and social justice for all, individual liberty will become a cherished value and dignity of the individual, a living reality not only for the privileged few but for every member of society. Despite repeated affirmations of faith by the political leadership in people's involvement in the development process, the government and development bureaucracy at the state, district and grassroots level, have failed to harness this essential input in the realization of development goals.

Empirical studies show that the grand community development programme conceived as a 'people's programme' failed to 'take off' because it degenerated into a 'government' programme designed and executed solely by officials without people's involvement. Although local people's participation in the planning and execution of rural development programmes was accepted by the government at the Union and state levels as the crucial variable in bringing about rural change and that realization rightly led to the institutionalization of people's participation in development in the form of panchayat raj institutions, the government weakened these bodies by not holding elections at the stated intervals, by starving them of financial and other powers, by failing to provide them adequate opportunities to take up planning and implementation work on a sizable scale, by establishing and strengthening bureaucratic agencies like the SFDA, Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), etc., to plan and administer major rural development programmes and above all by imposing top-down planning on institutions of local self-government. The democratic decentralization system which was established in the states in 1959 to institutionalize people's participation in the development process at the district, block and village levels has not been given a fair trial even after two decades. Under the circumstances, it is not difficult to see why the government has not yet come out with a policy decision on the quantum

and mode of people's participation in development administration. In a developing democracy, the political and administrative elite must not misconceive people's power and participation as an encroachment on their authority, prestige and power but as an essential input to the success of development administration in the country.

# *District Administration and Democratic Decentralisation*

*H.C. Mahajan*

Ever since the Government of India has taken upon itself the task of development, the democratic institutions particularly from village level upwards have been given an increasing role in development administration. Over the years a three-tier system of democratic decentralisation has emerged the village panchayat, the block samiti (committee) and zila parishad at the district level.

The development programmes in different parts of the country taken up under community development have been successful in proportion to the meaningful interaction between the local level institutions and the block, sub-divisional and district administrations. There has been a tendency on the part of the government servants to attribute the failure of development programmes to the local level politicians who have allegedly tried to misuse government funds for their individual gains instead of using them for the community. The failure of the community development programmes has been as much due to bureaucratic complacency as the misdemeanour of the rural elite. Surely a BDO can misutilise funds with greater impunity than a block samiti pradhan who may lose office if he loses the confidence of the samiti members. The block samiti members may try to use their position to distribute favour to their supporters at the cost of their opponents; it is here that the BDO can do the balancing act by ensuring that the less vocal sections of society are protected from partisan politicians and get their due share in development projects.

Not all the money which is allotted by the government goes to the section of people for which it is intended. The

people, who are entrusted with money, be they bureaucrats or politicians, have tended to misuse or divert a portion of the funds for purposes other than productive. After independence, a more vocal middle class has emerged both in the rural sector and government service which is neither too idealistic not to be tempted by the lure of money nor too prosperous to resist petty allurements, a sumptuous meal or a small present or a bottle of liquor. So long as this section of government servants has a hand in using government funds for rural development, there is every likelihood of the funds not reaching the village poor or reaching only the most vocal rural section which consists of reasonably well off farmers, school teachers and well established artisans and small scale industrialists. There is no possibility of indoctrinating the reasonably secure government job-holders with the ideology of establishing a socialistic pattern of society as they are congenitally incapable of sharing anything with the most neglected and poorest segments of society.

What then should be the reasonably realistic approach to rural development. Rural development means emancipating the rural poor by improving their nutritional level and social status. The majority of rural poor consists of agricultural labourers who have absolutely no security of jobs and are therefore, living miserably; they cannot be taken out of agriculture and given self-employment calling for capital investment for they do not have both means and skills for it. In some stray cases the government might have been able to give some capital for setting up an industry or trade to a few of them but no reasonable, dependable system has yet been evolved to ensure an existence for them during the gestation period of the self-employment activities.

The most responsible institution to look after the rural poor is the village itself and ways and means have to be devised for making the village discharge its duties of helping or uplifting its most unfortunate dwellers. At the moment, the Government of India presumes to be looking after the poorest of the poor in the remotest villages of our country. The Central government contributes 50 per cent of the IRDP and National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) funds. If, however, a villager selected under the IRDP does not get financial assist-



ance in time or gets much reduced assistance than he is supposed to get, it will be rather a stupendous task for him to get an interview to represent his grievances to the collector not to speak of the secretary to the Government of India in Krishi Bhavan.

Democratic decentralisation must be preceded by effective decentralisation of executive and financial powers from the Government of India at the top to the village panchayat at the bottom. The impossibility of forming a system of administration to prevent completely the misuse of funds should not be taken as an excuse for concentrating all financial powers in the uppermost echelons of the Central and state governments. Planning for development and execution of development schemes can never be realistic and responsive unless the village panchayat, block samiti and zila parishad are vested with financial powers to execute development schemes within their jurisdictions. These institutions have to be provided with administrative and technical support wherever required.

With so much expansion of education, university graduates can be recruited and trained as village officers. At block samiti level, BDOs already exist with suitable staff and can be strengthened if required. Zila parishads are not given much work except in Gujarat and Maharashtra. The performance of Gujarat zila parishads has been quite encouraging and their pattern can be adopted in other states too.

Village panchayats, block samitis and zila parishads should have a fair idea of the likely allocation of funds at the beginning of the year, so that they can plan realistically, based on the felt needs of the people. Irregularities, financial as well as matters pertaining to posting and transfers of employees, are likely to arise and to prevent them, the sub-divisional officer can be given sufficient powers to stay the execution of works and orders issued by the block samiti and zila parishad respectively. The sub-divisional officer and collector should give more attention to coordination and control over personnel rather than getting themselves involved in money transactions. As all the funds belonging to the government are taxes collected from the people, there should be no hesitation in placing the funds at the disposal of democratic institutions.

Democratic institutions will be in a better position to see and assess the working of development department. If the farmers, in a particular area, are not getting fertiliser and seeds at the rate fixed by the government, they can always go to their elected representatives in the block samiti or zila parishad and register their grievances; it cannot be denied that the people have easier access to elected representative than to the sub-divisional officer or collector. Vesting the local institutions with the development functions and leaving only the general supervision of development projects with the sub-divisional officer and collector will give the latter sufficient time to devote to regulatory coordination and law and order functions. If necessary, the collector can be given more powers initially to prevent the misuse of funds by local institutions, but this should be progressively reduced when local institutions become more responsive to political awakening and enlightened public opinion. The IRDP and NREP are well conceived schemes but they cannot be successful unless the village panchayat is more actively involved in them.

All NREP works should be executed by the village panchayat with the assistance of a selected team of poor unemployed persons. The village officer will be responsible for proper distribution of funds. The village panchayat will also prepare a perspective plan for helping the poorest people under the IRDP. This plan can be prepared with the help of the village officer who will ensure that no undue favours are given to a particular section of the village at the cost of other sections. The block samiti and BDO will finally approve the schemes and ensure the institutional finance. The block samiti will be under the control of the zila parishad and the BDO shall work under the chief executive officer. To obviate victimisation of employees, the sub-divisional officer and collector will have a final say in the annual confidential rolls of all grades of employees working in these institutions.

The sub-divisional officer and collector will chair grievance committee meetings in their respective jurisdictions to which the members of the village panchayat, block samiti and zila parishad will be called. They will similarly chair coordination meetings of sub-divisional and district level officers to solve problems brought forward by the grievance committee as well

as the coordination committee. The collector should be given security of tenure or be treated as representative of the president at the district level.

Collectors are transferred too frequently and the average tenure of a collector in India today is reported to be less than one year. A collector may be posted by state government for a fixed term of three years and should not be transferred before the expiry of the term without the consent of the Central government. The collector may also be allowed to send a monthly confidential report direct to the Government of India covering natural calamities, serious law and order problems, activities of local institutions and Central government organisations. This will give a good idea to the Central government about important happenings in the entire country, and relief can be rushed to the spot in case of need. This will also contribute an element of political stability in many a state.

# *Agrarian Reforms in a District with Special Reference to a Weaker Social Group\**

*Sujata Singh*

The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes constitute the bulk of the landless in India. The scheduled castes are socially and economically the most deprived sections of society. They are mainly landless agricultural labourers, or are found toiling in the most unremunerative and degrading occupations.

The government under its various welfare and developmental programmes in general and poverty removal programmes in particular, seeks to give extra attention to the

\*A study undertaken in 1982 to determine the impact of the agrarian reforms on the scheduled castes in two villages Dhanoli and Semra of the Agra district of UP. Dhanoli is 8 kms. from Agra city and Semra is in the interior on the Mathura border, 21 kms. from Agra.

A list of scheduled castes households was prepared with the help of the VLW. From each village 80 households were chosen at random. The sample size was fixed at 160 respondents. The Jatav sub-caste group constituted 80.40 per cent of the sample on the basis of the strength of its population in both Dhanoli and Semra. However, other sub-castes like Khatik, Balmik, Dhobi, Kori, Bandha and Kumhar were also represented in the sample. The members belonging to the Jatav sub-caste were mainly shoe-makers in Dhanoli while in Semra, most of them followed agricultural occupation. Accordingly, 45.62 per cent respondents were engaged in agriculture and 35 per cent in the shoe making industry. The other vocations like government service, sweeping, rickshaw pulling and petty trading were also represented in the sample.

Data were collected through both primary as well as secondary sources. Much information was elicited through informal conversations and discussions.

welfare of the scheduled castes. The directive principles of state policy envisage a special responsibility on the part of the state towards improving their lot. The five year plans are an effort to provide some wherewithal by which the quality of their life could be improved. While redistributing the surplus land, preference is to be given by the state governments to members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. What then has been the impact of land distribution on the weaker sections? Has it helped alleviate or mitigate their appalling poverty?

### *Background*

The urban scheduled caste population of Agra district was slightly higher than that of some other districts of UP.

Dhanoli and Semra presented pictures of sharp contrast. They differed in the facilities available. Their paces of development were unequal. Communication essential for development was badly lacking in Semra. The village was linked by kachcha roads and the horse-drawn cart was the main mode of transportation available. These factors had made the village more inaccessible. Dhanoli, on the other hand, was well-connected with Agra. Bus service was regular. Besides, other modes of transport such as auto-rickshaws, tractors, pedicabs and cycles were available. The main roads were also in good condition. A villager in Dhanoli was much more mobile. A large number of its respondents (70 per cent) owned cycles whereas only 29 per cent of the respondents in Semra owned cycles. The distance between Dhanoli and Agra could be covered on a cycle, which is not so in the case of Semra. Incidentally, Agra is the nearest town for both Dhanoli and Semra. Dhanoli is 8 kms. away from Agra while Semra is 21 kms. Unless Semra is connected to Agra with good roads, it will continue to remain isolated.

The total area of Dhanoli is 1,751 acres while Semra has a much larger area of 4,741 acres. In Dhanoli, nearly one half of the land of the village has been acquired by the government for the construction of an air force station. This has pushed up the cost of land or real estate in general. Land, on the other hand, is cheaper in Semra due to obvious reasons.

*Economic Background*

As a result of Dhanoli's urban proximity, the gap in the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the two villages is widening. The total area of Dhanoli is only about one-fourth of that of Semra. Again the total agricultural land in Dhanoli was about a thousand acres out of which about 988 acres was cultivable. In Semra, on the contrary the total agricultural land was about 4,000 acres, out of which 3,941 acres was cultivable. In Dhanoli, the net area under irrigation was 776 acres, while 212 acres remained unirrigated. Tube-wells were the only source of irrigation. However, in Semra, the net area under irrigation was 2,136 acres and 2,077 acres was without any irrigation facility. Three main sources of irrigation were the tube-wells, ordinary wells and canal. All these factors have brought about a change in the life style and thinking of the people. In Dhanoli, not much importance was attached to the land. The scheduled castes were trying to commercialise shoe-making. They were keen to seek governmental assistance for setting up cottage industries specialising in leather goods and for marketing the finished product. Also here, the people were more open to new ideas and innovations.

Not much had changed in the sleepy Semra where time seemed to have stood still. The villager here attached a great importance to agricultural land. He was more interested in seeking government help by way of land redistribution and provision of credit facilities for buying agricultural inputs and implements.

Dhanoli is no more in the 'cart age'. Motor vehicles have replaced the cart. Tractors have, to a large extent, replaced the plough. Farmers not owning tractors could always get them on hire. Tractor owners were doing a brisk business, and so were owners of tube-wells who sell water to other farmers. There were altogether nine tractors and 167 tube-wells in the village. However, none of the scheduled caste families owned tractors. A majority of them owns only a bare minimum of agricultural implements.

In Semra, though, the tractor and tube-wells have appeared on the scene, yet the traditional pattern of agriculture is still continued. Here, again none of the scheduled caste families owned tractors. Teams of camels carrying, potatoes and other

goods, are a very familiar sight. Loaded camels come here from neighbouring Rajasthan too. Semra trades mainly in cash crops like potatoes, which have started flooding the market as farmers had gone in for this crop, in a big way. It is mainly an agricultural economy which sustains Semra where cottage industry is playing only a subsidiary role. Farmers are inclined to adopt scientific methods of farming but little attention had been paid towards the development of cottage industries.

Electric and water supply facilities were lacking in both the villages. Lack of electrification hampers the development of rural economy, both agricultural as well as industrial.

### *Impact of Land Reforms Scheme*

According to the 1981 census the percentage of scheduled castes engaged in agriculture, either as small cultivators or as labourers is 76.39 per cent.

As mentioned elsewhere, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have preference in the distribution of surplus land.

Tables 1-A and 1-B present the land distribution pattern adopted by the government, for the allotment of land declared surplus due to the fixation of land ceiling.

These tables show that out of 54,26,120 acres of land estimated to be surplus, 44,74,852 acres (82.24 per cent) was declared surplus. From a total of 44,74,852 acres of land declared surplus, only 31,24,014 acres (69.81 per cent) was taken possession of, out of which 22,61,415 acres (72.39 per cent) was actually distributed. The scheduled caste beneficiaries account for 41.32 per cent of the total number of persons benefited under the land distribution programme. Again, from 7,03,690 scheduled caste beneficiaries in the country, UP alone accounted for 1,49,745. This may be attributed to the fact that UP has the largest concentration of scheduled caste population (22.39 per cent) in the country. However, the total area distributed to the scheduled castes in UP was 1,42,565 acres while at the same time total number of scheduled caste beneficiaries was as high as 1,49,745. It may be inferred from this data that each beneficiary got less than an acre of land.

From a total of 160 families, two families in Dhanoli and 23 in Semra had been given land under the land distribution

TABLE 1(A) LAND DISTRIBUTION PATTERN

	<i>Total area estimated to be surplus</i>	<i>Total area declared surplus</i>	<i>Total area taken possession</i>
UP	3,03,877	3,03,877	2,77,746
(Total all India)	54,26,120	44,74,852	31,24,014

TABLE 1(B)\*

	<i>Total area distributed</i>	<i>Total area distributed to SCs</i>	<i>Total number of benefi- ciaries</i>	<i>Total number of SC benefi- ciaries</i>
UP	2,47,819	1,42,565	2,07,890	1,49,745
Total (all India)	22,61,415	8,24,551	17,03,053	7,03,690

\*Source : Government of India, *Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*, Sixth Report, 1983-84.

scheme. The poor performance in Dhanoli may be attributed to the fact that there is hardly any surplus land in this village, where, as mentioned earlier, half the land has been acquired for the construction of an air force station.

#### *Year of Receiving Land, Type of Land and Area (in Bighas)*

The type of land given to most of them was, however, barren, unproductive and undeveloped. Moreover, the quantity of land allotted, was less than a bigha (half an acre).

Thus, it can be inferred that the land distribution scheme has had little impact on the economic condition of the scheduled castes mainly on account of the poor quality and the insufficient quantity of land allotted. More than 50 per cent of the total sample had no land either in 1970-71 or in 1980-81. As shown in Table 2 more than three-fourths of the sample population in Dhanoli had no land in 1970-71 as also in 1980-81. In the case of Semra, the position regarding land holdings improved by 1980-81. In 1980-81, 30 per cent of the



sample did not have any land as compared to 58.75 per cent, who were landless in 1970-71. As has already been stated a total number of 23 families in Semra and 2 families in Dhanoli joined the land holding class by 1980-81, as a result of the government allotting land to them, under its land redistribution programme. Among the other land holders, a majority of them was having less than 3 bighas of land and the situation regarding land holdings has almost remained unchanged, even after a decade.

TABLE 2 LAND HOLDINGS

(in bighas)

Land holding	Dhanoli				Semra			
	1970-71		1980-81		1970-71		1980-81	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
No land	63	78.75	61	76.25	47	58.75	24	30.00
less than 1	6	7.50	8	10.00	5	6.25	28	35.00
1 to less than 3	8	10.00	8	10.00	10	12.50	10	12.50
3 to less than 6	2	2.50	2	2.50	7	8.75	7	8.75
6 to less than 9	—	—	—	—	4	5.00	4	5.00
9 to less than 12	—	—	—	—	3	3.75	3	3.75
12 and above	1	1.25	1	1.25	4	5.00	4	5.00
TOTAL	80	100.00	80	100.00	80	100.00	80	100.00

### Total Cultivated Land

Land under cultivation, of a majority of the land holders was less than three bighas. Among the landowning households, none had reported either leasing in or leasing out land. As indicated in Table 3 by 1980-81, 28.75 per cent families joined the land holding category in Semra and more land was brought under cultivation. However, each beneficiary had less than 1 bigha under cultivation. Again, 10 per cent of the beneficiaries in Semra and 2.5 per cent in Dhanoli (constituting the total number benefited), were not cultivating the land because it was uneconomic.

TABLE 3 TOTAL CULTIVATED LAND OF THE LAND HOLDING RESPONDENTS

(in bighas)

Total cultivated land	Dhanoli				Semra			
	1970-71		1980-81		1970-71		1980-81	
	No.	Percent-	No.	Percent-	No.	Percent-	No.	Percent-
	tage	tage	tage	tage	tage	tage	tage	tage
No land	63	78.75	61	76.25	47	58.75	24	30.00
Less than 1	6	7.50	8	10.00	5	6.25	18	22.50
1 to less than 3	8	10.00	7	8.75	10	12.50	12	15.00
3 to less than 6	2	2.50	1	1.25	7	8.75	7	8.75
6 to less than 9	—	—	—	—	4	5.00	4	5.00
9 to less than 12	—	—	—	—	3	3.75	3	3.75
12 and above	1	1.25	1	1.25	4	5.00	4	5.00
Uneconomic land	—	—	2	2.50	—	—	8	10.00
TOTAL	80	100.00	80	100.00	80	100.00	80	100.00

*Land Yield*

The total production, in 1971 and in 1981 of most landholders on an average was less than 5 quintals. Green revolution had made little impact on the marginal farmers in the two villages because of the small size of the land holdings and the economic conditions of their families. There were only a small number of farmers, producing more than 13 quintals and having land more than 12 bighas. About 12.50 per cent of the sample families were not cultivating land which was given to them by the government, due to its uneconomic character.

*Cropping Pattern*

Most of the land holders, raised two crops in a year, bajra (small millet) and wheat. However, the beneficiary respondents were either not raising any crops, or were raising only one crop. Only two out of 23 beneficiaries were raising two crops in a year. The under-utilisation of land could be attributed to the poor quality of land allotted; the lack of irrigation facilities and the incapacity of the landholders to invest inputs. Table 4 presents the land-use pattern of the beneficiaries.

TABLE 4 LAND-USE PATTERN OF THE BENEFICIARIES

Type of land use	Dhanoli		Semra	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Cultivated land of which one crop cultivation	—	—	13	16.25
Two crops cultivation	—	—	2	2.50
Uncultivable land	2	2.50	8	10.00
NA	78	97.50	57	71.25
TOTAL	80	100.00	80	100.00

*Source of Finance for Improving the Undeveloped Land*

If both the beneficiaries were not cultivating the land in Dhanoli they also had not tried to develop the land mainly because they could not afford to pay the high interest rates on loans charged by the banks. Many respondents complained that corruption was rampant in the banking and cooperative sectors. In Semra, 10 per cent of the beneficiaries availed of bank loans to improve their lands, whereas 8.75 per cent tried to improve their lands with whatever resources they had. The loans were advanced by the Canara Bank. In 1976 while 8.75 per cent had taken a loan of Rs. 100 each 1.25 per cent had borrowed Rs. 300 each.

*Receipt of Pattas*

Both the beneficiaries in Dhanoli had received 'pattas' (title deeds) of the land given to them by the government. In Semra about 45 per cent of the beneficiaries had received 'pattas'. However, they complained that the patwari had to be bribed for issuing the 'pattas'. Some of the allottees expressed their resentment that the patwari was not giving them the 'pattas' as they could not pay the amount demanded by him.

All the beneficiary families were still in possession of the land given to them and had not transferred or sold it. It was difficult for them to sell it because of its unproductive nature.

*Awareness Regarding Scientific Agricultural Inputs*

Knowledge of scientific agricultural inputs like high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilisers and insecticides or pesticides, was poor. There were a few who were aware of modern agricultural inputs but they were not using them in the absence of irrigation facilities and requisite finance.

From the tables on land holdings it is clear that little change in the life of the villages has taken place over a period of ten years. Produce-wise, there has been only marginal improvement.

*Irrigation*

A majority of the respondents stated that their main source of irrigation was tube-wells owned by rich landlords, and the water charges varied between Rs. 12-16 for an hour's water supply. They feel that they are being overcharged by the rich farmers but they do not have any alternative. The water rates are specially high because in the absence of the supply of electricity to the villages the pump sets are run on diesel engine. However, about 4 per cent in Dhanoli and 2.50 per cent in Semra, have their own irrigation facilities. A large number, are still dependent on the benevolence of nature.

*Marketing*

While 3.75 per cent in Dhanoli were marketing their agricultural produce within the village itself, the percentage of respondents selling their produce in the village was 13.75 in Semra. Semra has an elaborate weekly market attracting traders from outside the village. In Dhanoli, 2.50 and in Semra 12.50 per cent were marketing their agricultural produce outside the village, through middle men, who made the maximum profit. However, a majority of landholders, both in Dhanoli and in Semra, had no surplus for sale. Though they were aware of the fact that they were being exploited, there was no way of eliminating the middle man from the scene. There was no cooperative society or any governmental organisation for marketing purposes.

*Annual Household Income*

In 1970-71, the income per family for the majority of the

families in both the villages (45 per cent in Dhanoli and 67.50 per cent in Semra) ranged between Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 2,000. However, a small group of respondents constituting 5 per cent in Dhanoli and 3.75 per cent in Semra could not show any source of income for the year 1970-71 as it was not in the work force during that period. Nor any of its members headed a household at that time. By 1980-81, a total of 21.15 per cent families in Dhanoli had an annual income in the range of Rs. 2,001 to 3,000, while 16.25 were in the income range of Rs. 4,001 to 5,000. However, a large number in Semra (33.75 per cent) were still in the income range of Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 2,000, whereas 22.50 per cent were in the range of Rs. 2,001 to Rs. 3,000. Thus majority in Semra continue to live below the poverty line.

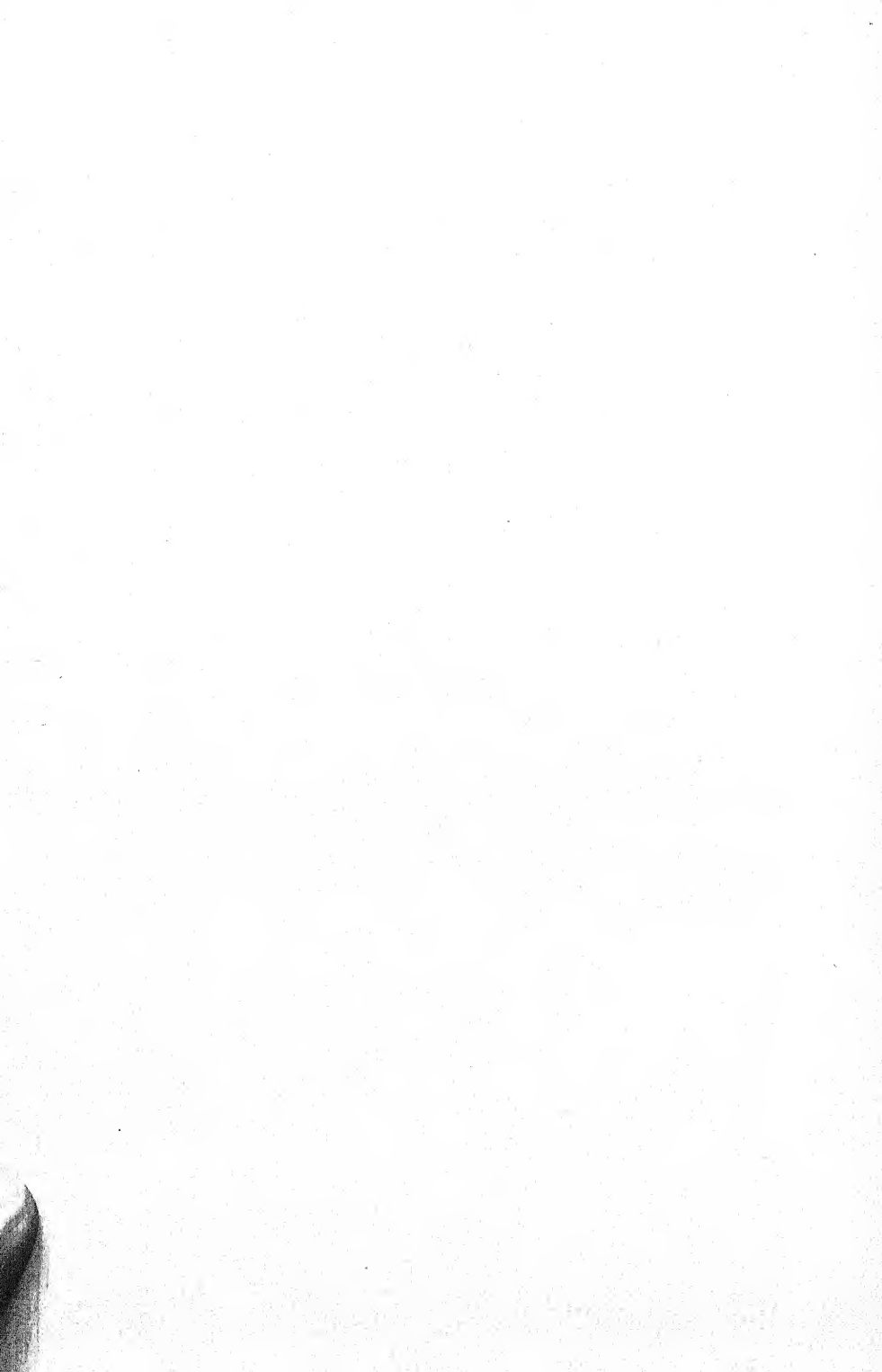
Among the families covered under the survey, 23 families in Semra and 2 in Dhanoli had got land from the government. It should, however, be noted that only 15 families were cultivating the land allotted to them. The land given to the respondents was of an inferior quality. Most of the beneficiaries were raising only one crop a year as they were dependent on the monsoon as the source of water. The only irrigation facility was private tube-wells, whose owners charged exorbitant rates. If the government is really serious about bringing in agrarian reforms, it should first, plug the loopholes in the Land Ceiling Act, which in its present form offers tremendous scope for manipulation by the rich landlords. Most of the surplus land is retained by the landlords under the cover of benami and whatever land is surrendered, is in the form of fragmented unproductive bits scattered here and there. This is normally done with the active connivance of the government machinery. Organising farming on a cooperative basis could have made the individual units more viable but this could not be done in the case of fragmented holdings, scattered here and there. As things stand, the land allotted to individual farmers is too small in size to offer any scope for development. Scientific methods in farming could be employed only when the unit is viable.

The concept of small farming unit has been advocated by agricultural scientists and agro-economists but this would only be viable when the land is fertile, fit for cultivation and

has basic infrastructural facilities. Thus, the mere distribution of land will not serve any purpose unless matching support of agro-services is provided. Tractors and other agricultural implements could be loaned to them by the government or some service cooperative, at concessional rates. Left to themselves, the beneficiaries could not be expected to develop their lands as their economic condition does not permit them to do so. The land so distributed could also be used for other productive purposes like dairy farming, sheep rearing, etc. Providing marketing facilities is equally important. Support should also be provided in the form of agro-extension services which may be looked after by the agricultural department of the lead bank in the area. They could advise the farmers on better cropping pattern, better land use techniques, soil conservation, etc., so that the farmers' venture may become profitable. On the contrary, most respondents complained about the indifferent attitude of government officials, particularly the VLW. In Semra, the scheduled caste population held the VLW guilty of practising untouchability.

Again, the officials seem to be more concerned about fulfilling targets without going into the merit of a case. This approach percolates to all levels. A stock-taking attitude is clearly noticeable in the meetings where the chief development officer is busy looking at the targets with the BDOs giving him details about the number of cases covered. There can be no rural development as long as this attitude prevails among government officials. The number of people given land is not the all important question. What is more relevant is the type of support services provided, efforts made at improving the land allotted and the sense of involvement of the bureaucracy.

PART II  
PROCEEDINGS





## *District Administration Then and Now*

During the British days, the pivot of administration was the district and the principal task of the district administration was the maintenance of law and order and collection of revenues. The head of the district, the collector, was very close to the people and used to solve their various problems. After independence, the district administration has undergone a radical change and consequently, the structure and task of district administration have also changed. The two major factors responsible for the change are, democracy and development. The goal of the government is to bring about improvement in the standard of living of the people. The collector today is more a servant of the public than a representative of the government as in the past, and the main focus of attention has been shifted from law and order to the welfare of the people.

Since 1951 several new plans were formulated. A series of development programmes in rural areas were implemented. In 1952 community development became an important objective of the district administration all over the country. In spite of the emphasis laid on intensification and modernisation of agricultural activities for increased agricultural production, the conditions of the rural areas did not improve much. The poor farmers did not get any advantage from the various schemes taken up for implementation. So in the seventies the poverty elimination schemes were conceived. Several schemes like integrated rural development, antyodaya, abolition of bonded labour, housing for rural poor, employment in rural areas and food for work were formulated. The district administration had to implement these schemes for the benefit of the

people. However, in many states on the whole, the district officials are not at all concerned with the programmes of development.

The collector prefers to call himself district magistrate and not development officer. The command area development, an urgent need of the time, is neglected; so are other developmental programmes. Pertinently, three major questions that arise in this context are: (i) to what extent the district administration, equipped for law and order, has undergone transformation for ushering in a welfare state? (ii) how much the district administration is near to the people? and (iii) what is the level of efficiency in the district administration?

As far as the first question is concerned, no change has taken place. As a result, the hopes and aspirations of the people have not been fulfilled. The gulf between the people and the administration has not yet been bridged. It was expected that the district machinery would come closer to the people and would act as an agent of change. There is a little evidence to suggest that the administration has gone nearer to the people or the distance between the people and the administration has been narrowed down. In the past, the district officer was a man on the spot and took decisions on a wide variety of matters. He used to go to the rural areas on horseback and pitched even his tent there to look into the problems of the people. Any farmer could meet the officer to get redressed his grievances.

Today the collector makes flying visits to the villages by jeep or car but he is less accessible to the people than before. Formerly the patwari used to stay permanently in his village and solve the disputes pertaining to the land. Now neither the patwari nor the village accountant is available in the village. There is a complete absence of the administration at the village level. Consequently, functions of the village level remain neglected. The efficiency of the administration has gone very much down.

The clerk these days does not perform even his routine functions and the patwari does not enter even mutations on records. In spite of the technological advancement and the availability of sophisticated management techniques like Programme Evaluation Review Technique/Critical Path

Method (PERT/CPM) and cost benefit analysis, development activities continuously suffer. Many district officers have no knowledge of national plans, nor have they adequate data at their disposal for organising economic activities. Senior officials are normally not inclined to assume the responsibility to train and motivate their juniors. Coordination and cohesiveness are lacking, and there is cognitive dissonance at the district level. There is an urgent need to develop new norms of inspection and supervision.

The number of functionaries is increasing gradually but administration is weak in its monitoring and evaluation. The disease of departmentalism and unwanted rivalries between the police and district authorities are other factors responsible for declining efficiency. The satisfaction that the district administration could give to its people, should be measured in terms of quality. The district administration should remain away from pressures. The district officer should be fully aware of the plans, policies and priorities set for the district and he should be able to overcome pressures and impediments and play his role effectively to meet the new challenges and new tasks. It should be the aim of the district administration to bring about changes, introduce innovations and effectively implement the schemes to achieve the satisfaction of the people.

Democracy and development have indeed augmented the functional burden of the district administration. The district administrative 'machinery' has undergone to some extent changes for the socio-economic well-being of the people conceived by development and democracy.

The function of land revenue is most unattended. Even though certain types of land holding are exempted from revenue only 20-30 per cent of the land revenue is collected annually. A subordinate officer using methods of coercion for realising the land revenue is liable for legal action. The directorate of land records is functioning more vertically and most cases arising out of land revenue are transferred to the settlement officer. The functioning of these two officers of equal rank, the one with more powers than the other, affects the smooth working of the district administration. The lack of technical knowledge and expertise in the field of development

generally creates more problems. Landowners are not tillers of the soil. Although the transfer of land from non-adivasis to adivasis is completely banned, the officers allotting land do all sorts of wrong things and create botheration for the collector.

In the sphere of rural development, "is the collector a friend of the public"? The answer is in the affirmative. However, when projects of rural development are planned at the block level, representatives of the public make efforts to include their own projects which result in various difficulties for the block. They are not concerned about rules and regulations. Besides his traditional and development functions, the collector is responsible for multifarious duties including presiding over a number of district level committees. The collector is always busy and does not find time to do justice to any of his functions. The income from land revenue is less than the expenditure incurred on its collection and the maintenance of the establishment necessary for it. Whatever the drawback, the collection of revenue is indispensable but is given a low priority and in the case of certain categories of land holdings, it is given up.

The patwari is a figure highly politicised and the most controversial in the block. In Haryana, the patwari is supposed to live in a week two days at the tahsil headquarters and two days in the field but he does not do so. The field officers of the revenue department should be given proper training and a special pay as an incentive to undergo training.

In the areas of bank credit, the collector is considered to be a major force to reckon with and he gathers a few crores of rupees. As the collector has a lot of funds to deposit with the banks for the implementation of a number of programmes, the banks respect his position. The social welfare programme is largely confined to the disbursement of old age pension, and its entire burden is on the collector. The sanction of pension at the secretariat level takes enormous time and by then, more than half of the applicants passes out of existence. There is, therefore, an imperative need of imparting social welfare education to those who are concerned with the welfare administration.

The collector has to devote a lot of time for the maintenance of law and order. In Tamil Nadu, the revenue function

is entrusted to the DRO and the collector is mainly concerned with the coordination of activities at the district level. Under the minimum needs programme each village is being provided with the basic infrastructure to make it self-sufficient within a period of three years. Besides, there is also a programme of integrated rural development for each block. However, the health administration requires special attention. The collector is pursuing the development objectives with single-minded devotion and no development work can be done, unless there is satisfactory maintenance of law and order. The district administration has to come closer to the people. About 50 per cent of the collector's time is lost in meeting people and their representatives. Whether the collector today is more efficient or less is not a real problem. A collector is good if he has achieved the targets of development within the time. The patwari is a man of the public and the transfer of patwari however is not in the collector's hand. The collector is still the first among the equals though many centripetal forces have come into existence.

The bureaucracy alone is not enough for development work: there is a need for an outside structure to carry out the task of development. The size of district should be reduced and the area of each development work should be clearly demarcated. The government's attitude towards rural development is unrealistic and the funds meant for development have been misused. Over the years the rural elite has emerged claiming for itself all benefits of development. There is no identification of the poorest of the poor and officers are concerned with distribution of money.

There is a perceptible partisan attitude and funds are given to political supporters. Rural development in the first instance means elimination of rural poverty. The grants given under the IRDP alone cannot improve the rural economy. As far as social welfare programmes are concerned the collector is not accessible to the poor. In the matters of land reform in UP paradoxically the amin is more powerful than the collector in taking certain decisions. There must be, therefore, imparting of education and training for social and administrative management at the district level.

## *Administration of Law and Order*

The administration of criminal justice in the district is the pivot of the district government, but it suffers from want of financial resources for its modernisation and its various wings, namely, the prosecuting agency, magistracy and correctional services get only non-plan allocations. There is an urgent need for legislation for victim compensation to encourage public participation in crime prevention and detection, since there is little or no provision for such a compensation in the existing rules and regulations.

The crime rate is increasing with the pace of development in society. Crime poses a real threat to development as it distorts national goals and prevents optimal use of resources. The district administration should undertake research to prevent the increasing crime rate and proliferation of socio-economic offences. Delay has become the bane of criminal justice administration, and it operates in every action, the lodging of complaints, the investigation of crimes and the disposal of cases by the courts.

The courts of law are not often provided with equipment and infrastructural facilities like typewriters, and copying machine to carry on promptly and systematically with their functions. Superiors should exercise stricter control over their erring subordinates to check delays in criminal justice. There must be legislation for speedy trials, cutting down the levels of appeals and prescription of norms for cross-examination and strengthening of the hands of judiciary to deal with recalcitrant lawyers. A convention should be developed for completing all sessions cases in three months time and it should be extended to all magistrate's courts. Measures must be adopted to improve prosecution under effective supervision of overseeing police officers. Criminal justice administration in the district should be capable of checking socio-economic

offences like food adulteration, hoarding, manufacturing and marketing of spurious drugs and racketeering in jobs.

There is a total lack of people's participation in prevention of crime in the country. The idea that maintenance of law and order is a social responsibility is slowly gaining acceptance in western countries. Voluntary agencies can play an important role in educating the people in the prevention of crime and for the payment of compensation to the victim.

The increasing crime rate in the country is attributable to factors like population explosion, failure of the police and the role of the courts. The falling standards of legal education and the poor calibre of persons selected to the judiciary at the district level seriously interfere with the administration of justice. The introduction of police commissioners in metro-polises side by side with the traditional district police set-up headed by the superintendent of police created new problems. The state police chief tends to provide more resources and manpower to the commissioners ignoring the crying needs of the district police. It is, therefore, worthwhile to examine whether the commissioner system should be introduced in all districts or the traditional system should be adequately strengthened.

The lack of competence and integrity in public prosecutors, the violation of rules and norms in their appointment, the absence of communication between different rungs in the police hierarchy and the application of different yardsticks to urban and rural areas in the supply of police force tend to create considerable difficulties in the administration of criminal justice. Friction in the relationship between the district magistrate and the superintendent of police arises when the latter has considerable seniority in the service over the former.

There is a need to redefine the interpersonal relationship between the district magistrate and the superintendent of police in clear and definite terms. The positions in the police training colleges should be made more attractive with additional perquisites and higher status. The minimum education of the lower level functionaries like the assistant sub-inspector should be raised so as to ensure better and courteous behaviour on their part towards the citizen. Rural policing should be efficient. The strength of the armed police has been



steadily increasing but there is hardly any increase in the strength of the civil police for over 30 years.

The much needed help from the central reserve police force is not readily forthcoming whenever required, though the expenditure on the forces is partly met by the state governments. The policing in the medium sized cities should be adequate. The frequent transfers of police officers has weakened the criminal justice administration. The strength of the civil police is highly inadequate and the central reserve police force is not promptly responsive to the district magistrate or the superintendent of police largely due to the hierarchical constraints.

Further, the Central-government is often reluctant to spare the force for the maintenance of law and order in spite of the fact that the expenditure on it is partly shared by the states. In this circumstance, the state will have to raise their own armed battalions. Crimes are increasing with the changing character of the socio-economic life of the people and the existing law and order machinery is highly inadequate to cope with them. Further, departmental loyalties often lead to concealment of crimes. The police of all categories should be put directly under the control of the superintendent of police.

There must be effective sanction against fake encounters, mass cruelties and false prosecutions on the part of the police. The protection of the innocent citizens is the spirit behind the criminal justice administration. The law and order problems are on the increase because the traditional administration fails to rise up to the aspirations of the people for social justice. Student, agrarian and labour unrests are also rising.

In a free country like India, it is important that the administration must come close to the people, feel the pulse of the nation and strive to meet the needs and demands of the citizens. No amount of use of force can ensure lasting peace in society. Since prevention is better than cure, the administration must become more responsive to the needs of the people the large majority of whom is law abiding.



## *Natural Calamities and District Administration*

It is a primary responsibility of the district administration to take promptly emergency measures to combat natural calamities. Almost every year there are drought, flood, cyclone, fire and epidemic in different parts of the country. In most states institutional arrangements are made to meet such calamities. Apart from prompt and clear instructions, presence of mind, alertness, inter-dependence and cooperation at the district level, are indispensable to fight natural calamities. The personality of the collector combined with his ability for co-ordination can bring emergency situations under complete control.

In Bihar, flood and drought are annual features and there is a flood relief code containing comprehensive instructions as to the measures to be taken in times of flood. The early emphasis was on relief work only. To face emergencies like dam burst, proper strategies have to be evolved. A successful operation to contain natural calamities will depend on effective supervision by the district magistrate. The land laws and manuals need suitable amendments to arm the district magistrate with definite powers for supervision and coordination of the emergency administration.

The Gurgaon district in Haryana is both flood and drought prone. There is a cycle of drought once in four years and of flood, once in five years. A drought committee was appointed in July every year so as to take necessary measures well in advance. Change in the cropping pattern will go a long way, in fighting the drought. Extension of irrigation facilities by boring tube-wells and giving power connections to them will be a most desirable step. The existing power connections should be energised. In Gurgaon, as an experimental measure,

watershed management is started to conserve water. People's participation in combating natural calamities like flood and drought is indispensable. An early warning system should be developed, in order to enable the district administration to make the necessary preparation within 24 hours to face any emergency.

The two important points that arise in the context of emergency are : (i) what is required to be done to meet it ? and (ii) what should be the precautions to avoid it in future ?

The Damoh district of Madhya Pradesh suffers from drought or flood every alternate year. There is undoubtedly a need of consulting the local people and also for introducing change in the cropping pattern. It is difficult to take help from the army in flood situation because it creates a lot of problems at the local level. In calamities like fire, most of the districts either find that they have no fire fighting equipment or it is not in working order. The lack of resources or their unavailability at the required time imposes a serious limitation on the means of fighting emergency situation.

A separate chapter in the sixth five year plan explains the various measures to be adopted to contain or combat emergencies. They include the study of the frequency of the occurrences of natural calamities in the light of the collected historic data, early warning system, relief measures and long-run rehabilitation. The administrative personnel have to be given training to contain successfully emergencies. The district administration should be fully equipped including with essential data to enter into discussion with the Central relief assistance committee and to get adequate Central assistance. For obtaining adequate data at any critical moment, basic records should be kept up-to-date.

In the Gurgaon district, hailstorm is a recurring phenomenon which destroys or damages crops. It is surprising, however, that inspection reports assessing the extent of damage to crops is sent to the collectorate normally after six to seven months and therefore, the farmers affected cannot be given immediate relief. There must be a well-evolved system by which speedy assistance can be extended to the affected. For obtaining Central assistance, a financial memorandum is normally prepared with all necessary details but often, there is

delay in the release of Central assistance. A time-bound programme should be chalked out for meeting natural calamities.

Relief measures should be immediate as well as adequate. Some of the statutes like the Agricultural Loans Act (Act IX of 1883) are out-dated or should be amended or revised as to grant remission of the loan advanced to the farmers in times of drought and flood by the collector. There exists instruments like the famine code and flood relief manual giving detailed instructions to cope with natural calamities like famine and flood and the repetitive character of the problems should keep the administrative leadership alert in dealing with them. Many states exaggerate the calamities to get more money from the centre.

All precautions should be taken to meet natural calamities but very often, they are outdone by the intensity or extent of the calamities. The main problem in times of calamities in the district is that of communication. The collector should make his own judgement and must be prepared to tackle the problem by the means available to him. He should give priority to restore the communication with the help of the concerned departments. When the Pipara barrage was broken, 1200 people would have died had it not been for the arrangements made by the district administration to avert the tragedy. Effective liaison should be maintained with other departments.

If the administration is efficient in normal times, it can automatically be effective in emergency. Petty departmentalism should not be a hindrance to the district administration in working as a team. The restoration of communication should be immediately followed by the maintenance of civil supplies. In such a situation people's participation is very much forthcoming spontaneously and even politicians come forward with their help. Coordination of voluntary organisations engaged in relief operations is essential.

The collector is indeed free to withdraw the necessary amounts from the treasury to accord relief to the people and in 1965, the collector of one of the districts in Maharashtra has taken from the treasury for this purpose no less than Rs. five crore. The collector must be able to judge for himself the areas where natural calamities are likely to strike. During the natural calamities, the tendency of many officers in the

district is to project themselves instead of steadfastly organising the necessary measures with efficiency, integrity and objectivity.

Any emergency situation calls for a rational approach and mutual trust between the various levels of administration from the district to the Central. In natural calamities first few days will be difficult to manage, unless the district authorities are very mobile and the collector is capable of playing his part as the leader of the official fraternity of the district. However, the contact between the district officials and the people is gradually waning. Now-a-days hurried tours are undertaken by the district officials and they do not normally discuss the problems with the villagers. The officers hardly have any night halts. As a result, the people are left to the tender mercy of the petty village-level functionaries.

There must be regular inspection of various offices in the district. Frequent inspection is one of the measures by which official corruption can be exposed. The administration is becoming more and more distant from the people despite the existence of good communication facilities. The collector must act on his own initiative and judgement in emergency situation. If emergencies are to be tackled successfully, the district officers must acquaint themselves fully with the problems of the district. Every effort should be made to keep up the system of communication in sound condition. The contact of the collector with the people is on the decrease and therefore the grievances of the people are multiplying.

## *Pressures on District Administration*

In Sikkim, there are excessive pressures on the district administration so much so the collector has a very tough time. Verbal instructions from the political levels to the collector are frequent and in view of such instructions his role has to be redefined. Most of these instructions are negative in character and inadequate in content. The ministry of home affairs should define the role of the collector so that he can faithfully discharge his duties and obligations relating to law and order and development.

The kinds of pressures prevailing over the district administration are :

1. Pressures arising from the erosion of power and the distribution of responsibility.
2. Political pressures.
3. Social pressures.
4. Pressures in regard to according priority.
5. Pressures brought about by interface problems.

There should be some machinery to deal with the disputes arising from ministerial intervention in the course of district administration. It happened so in a state that a minister who was a party to the land dispute, asked the collector to be present in the minister's office and when the collector sought the guidelines of the commissioner, the latter remained silent. As the collector did not report to the minister's office, a motion of privilege was adopted by the assembly and upon its basis the collector was summoned and grilled. In these circumstances, no collector can discharge his statutory obligation leave alone his normal administrative duties.

Of course, pressures are normal features of a democratic society and the district administration has to exist with them. To aggravate the situation, not seldom the ruling party

wants the collector to toe its line especially on controversial matters. Pressures are often brought upon the collector to declare a district as being affected by natural calamities whether factually substantiated or not, in order that money is obtained from the state government to serve political ends or personal purposes of the influencing politicians. The district administration should justifiably distinguish between self-interest and public interest. Of late, the number of agencies exerting pressures like advisory committees and 20-point programme committees has increased. Demands for social justice have considerably enhanced the pressures on the district administration. Subordinates in the district administration do not lag behind in imposing upon the collector their will on various issues with the support of politicians.

There is no pressure as such on the district administration in states like West Bengal but it is influenced for the issue of licences, taxi permits and quota distribution. While in West Bengal, there is no direct interference of politicians in the district administration, they generally approach the ministers and the ministers in turn request for a particular course of action to the chief secretary and orders are passed from the top down through different channels of the bureaucracy. The only satisfaction in such cases is that the collector can check with the chief secretary regarding the legality of the orders. With criminalisation of politics and politicisation of criminals pressures on the superintendent of police are on the increase and they definitely operate against criminal justice administration. The most embarrassing of all pressures are those from very senior officers.

Pressures come from different sources and all sorts of unjustifiable demands are imposed on the district administration. Most of the demands are made by politicians for furthering their political objectives. However, all pressures may not be immoral or wrong. The civil services have to live with the time and the system because the people are becoming more and more conscious of their rights. However, there must be safeguards against wrong pressures. Upright officers are always protected. According to a recent study relevant in the context on pressures, civil servants are categorised into abettors, accommodators and resisters. The third category not

often has suffered. Pressures are natural in a democratic society, and they can be managed by analysing the problems. There is a need for re-orienting the administrative system. Though there is separation of the judiciary from the executive, the collector is still the coordinator of all activities of the district. The pressures from the subordinates create very difficult situations to manage. It is an administrative practice that seniors should support or defend the juniors in times of difficulty.

The load of work of the district administration is increasing but the procedures are dilatory and there is a sort of hush-hush on every matter. The district planning bodies are not professionalised and they do not have clear idea of their functions. The lack of skill in planning results in lack of administrative ability.

The size of the districts should be taken into account for the success of the development process. There is a need for having a few structural and functional changes. The load of work on the district administration necessitates the territorial re-organisation of the district. There should also be decentralisation of power from the district level down to the village panchayat level.

The district administration is not aware of the development orientation and skills needed for the management of multiplying functions. The need for training to develop the knowledge and skills of the personnel involved in the district administration is obvious. There is a dichotomy between the elite and the lobbies of interest groups and some times, they seek to expose the decision maker at the district level, the collector.

A distinction has to be drawn between legitimate pressures and illegitimate, and illegal pressures should be resisted and some administrative procedures and methods have to be devised for it.

## *District Administration and Local Democracy*

The task of the district administration is to identify what is possible rather than to reach at everything. It is also its task to harness the energies of local democratic institutions and people for developmental purposes. The problem of poverty cannot be tackled in the existing rural social structure by the block developmental agency. At the time of the selection of beneficiaries for a particular scheme by the village authority, the poorer are often neglected in favour of the vocal and influential. The financial assistance from the Central government does not come in time.

The democratically constituted panchayat raj institutions must be accorded a definite role in the planning and implementation of some of the local development programmes. Planning and execution of development schemes can never be realistic unless for the purpose, the local democratic institutions are equipped with substantial financial powers. For the successful operation of democracy local institutions should be strengthened. Popular involvement in the development programmes in terms of shramdan (gift of labour) should be encouraged for the creation of local assets such as village link roads. These efforts, however, have produced little success.

The tendency of administrators has often been to blame the politicians for the failures which actually in planning and implementation of development programmes can equally be attributed to their own apathy. Under the IRDP the responsibility of identifying and selecting the target groups for assistance has hardly been borne by either the block or the district level officials, who do not have adequate knowledge of the poor in their jurisdictions and are not properly motivated to help them. In the result, benefits sometimes go to the better off sections of society.



In Maharashtra, the IRDP is implemented by the district rural development agency headed by the executive officer of the zila parishad. The success of the scheme differs from place to place. There are some practical difficulties in the implementation of the scheme.

The villagers are not fully aware of the nature and details of the scheme, and as a result, thousands of applications are received most of which are incomplete. The scheme is linked with bank finances but bankers do not extend credit to the poor. Bankers insist on guarantees but the rural poor do not have any property to mortgage nor have they any contact with the people who could stand surety for the repayment of the loans. It should be compulsory for every civil servant to involve himself in the integrated rural development programmes which is the core of rural development. There is no incentives for junior officers employed in the integrated rural development programme. A scheme of incentives should be evolved to motivate the officers.

The IRDP is entrusted to the panchayat samiti and the BDO has very little to do with the selection of beneficiaries and projects. The panchayat samiti usually selects the schemes which get more grants and need not have to depend on loans. Politicians at the village level are not interested in explaining the details of the selected schemes to villagers. Therefore, the feedback is very poor.

The IRDP is linked with and fully dependent on bank finance. It takes the family as the unit of development necessitating detailed household survey. The banks complain that they do not receive applications for loan in the right time, and the rate of recoveries of the loans advanced under the scheme is very low. The banks are shy in giving loans as there are no effective means of recovery which in fact should be linked with the sale of the produce. The attitude of the beneficiaries is that the repayment of loan should be the responsibility of the government.

In 1981, the government was forced to write off a sum of Rs. 50 crore advanced by way of loan. Despite the clear instruction to the contrary from the Reserve Bank of India, the banks still insist on the guarantees from rural poor. Villagers do not know the distinction between a loan and a

grant and they do not bother about the question of repayment. Ultimately it becomes the responsibility of the BDO to recover the loan.

The local bank managers grumble that they are answerable to their regional offices and in the absence of recoveries of loan, they are not encouraged to finance the programme. It is difficult to identify the poor in the existing socio-economic settings of the country. Identification of beneficiaries has to be done by the project officers. It is a technical work and requires verification of facts. The bank officials themselves align with politicians and often extend the benefits due to the poor to other classes. The task of identifying the poor should be entrusted to the national sample survey.

Since the abuse of funds is as much by the administrators as by the politicians, the funds and functions of the DRDA should be entrusted to the zila parishad. The grass-roots level democracy should be tried in all earnestness. The funds for the IRDP should be given as a lump grant rather than on scheme-wise basis, so that, there will be more freedom to plan at the local level. Frequent transfers of officers, particularly collectors affect the implementation of development programmes. The collector should be considered as the representative of the President of India at the district level and Government of India's permission, may be made mandatory to his transfer.

The community development programme has strengthened the block administration. Under the present set-up in Tamil Nadu, the departmental officers are no longer bothered about the block as they are answerable only to their respective departments. Consequently, departments become more powerful and blocks are dependent on the state government for funds necessary to implement development programmes. Only in those blocks which have supplementary funds at their disposal, work is being done for development.

Popular involvement by way of mobilising resources and making developmental programmes acceptable to the people is possible only when there is effective communication between the administration and representative and voluntary bodies in the area. Discussions with the village leaders and voluntary and elected bodies on the development programme

help in overcoming some of the difficulties, and increase the responsiveness of the people. This is also a means of making programmes popular.

To narrow the gap between the people and the government, the authority should organise a mass-contact programme. In order to improve local democracy, there must be periodic dialogue between the officials and people's representatives. The procedure for hearing public grievances should be simple and direct as to render quick redress besides serving as a warning to the erring officers. It creates public confidence in the bureaucracy. There must be consultations and contacts with the people at different levels. The hearing of public grievances regularly by the collector and other officers has been in vogue in Tamil Nadu. On receipt of complaints from the people, a joint meeting of the district level officers is held once a week. After contacting the village representatives, the problems are sorted out by the officials of the block and district levels.

It has been suggested that taxation power should be given to the blocks so that an independent source of income would be available to them to take up schemes of local urgency on their own.

There is certainly a strong democracy at the district level in those states where zila parishad has been invested with powers necessary for its functions. From the days of the community development programme, it has been the government's endeavour to bring about judicious involvement of the local bodies or the people in the formulation and implementation of development schemes. However to devise a common method of achieving it, is difficult in view of the local variations. In states like Maharashtra and Gujarat, the local democratic institutions, cooperatives and voluntary bodies are relatively strong. On the other hand, in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan local democracy is not well-developed, although they have coordinating mechanisms for developmental activities at the the district level.

In spite of the increasing politicisation and functional proliferation, the character of district administration has not changed, and the distance between it and the people has been increasing. In the rapid multiplication of activities, the

new agencies instead of improving the capability for performance, have made the problem of coordination indeed complex.

The form and content of the district administration should be judged from the attitude of its personnel. The local democracy does not seem to follow the path of development. Due to diverging loyalties certain conflicts are found at the village level. A general trend of centralisation is also apparent at the higher echelons of the government.

Having identified the beneficiaries, the programmes suited to the local requirements should be drawn up. The programme should aim at improving the economic status of the individual. There are instances where people sell off their property to repay the loan taken under the different schemes of the IRDP. There is no point in selecting a scheme which may only deteriorate the conditions of the rural poor. It is very important that the officers who are implementing the IRDP should study the various schemes and learn to implement them properly.

There is a need for the right type of officials for the implementation of the rural development programmes. In Maharashtra, for example, most of the officers in the DRDA are drawn from departments and they do not like their postings to the agency. Some schemes of incentives should be created so as to make them work for the success of the programme. In West Bengal, the panchayat samiti is the main body for the selection of beneficiaries. The villagers do not make a distinction between loan and subsidy. Nevertheless, neither the politicians nor the non-officials help the poor.

Under the IRDP in UP, the DRDA is primarily engaged in the implementation of the individual beneficiary scheme mainly through the supply of bullocks, buffaloes and carts. There, of course, is a lot of malpractices. Since the poor people do not have land, even after getting buffaloes, they are without means to get fodder and cattle feed. The supply of bullocks and sewing machines hardly create jobs unless there are clients to put them to use. On the other hand, bullocks, buffaloes, sewing machines if eliminated, there will be only limited items left under the scheme.

Supervision is totally lacking in the district administration. The most important job of the chief executive officer is to supervise effectively the various schemes under implementation. Identification of beneficiaries should be done in every village and the methods adopted for identification should be verifiable. Only those schemes which are commercially viable and which augment the income of beneficiaries should be prepared.

Rural development agency has become a subsidy release organisation. In Nagaland, the rural development programme planning is done at the village level. The district development board reviews the schemes of the village. The BDO supervises the implementation of the scheme and it is the responsibility of the assistant engineer to oversee the implementation of the scheme. The village authority takes the responsibility for the repayment of loan.

Ironically the attitude of the cooperatives is far from cooperative. The cooperative societies are not playing the role which is assigned to them. In UP outside agencies are employed to identify the beneficiaries. In the hill areas of the state, a few years back, all development benefits were cornered by the rich. In Sikkim, various departments function in water-tight compartments and therefore, there is no coordination between different departments at the district and block levels. The DRDA is an unnecessary duplication. Although the district administration and local democracy are fundamental, there is some amount of inherent contradiction between the two of late. There is multiplicity of agencies at the district level which leads to multiplicity of ways of corruption.

Significant issues involved in plan preparation are not clear and the technology of planning has not yet been transferred to the district. In the absence of commitment, tensions that work against the proper functioning of the administration are bound to arise. If local democracy is to be successful, more and more government functions should be transferred to it. Developmental norms can be worked out in a better way if the required data and information are supplied at the time of planning.

Positive results in project implementation can be achieved, if local bodies generate their own funds and mobilise their

own resources. It is, therefore, necessary to identify the factors which contribute to the success of people's participation in some states, and suggest methods which would bring about a harmonious or ideal balance between the democratic and bureaucratic elements in the developmental process. It is in a way necessary that the district administration should forge viable linkages between the administrative departments, panchayat raj bodies, and economic institutions like cooperatives and banks.

For the preparation of plans it is essential to know in advance the extent of the availability of resources to the district as a whole. The plans and budget are now prepared department-wise and the final vetting of the district schemes and programmes is done at the state level. The national leadership may have some appreciation of the need for decentralization but the top bureaucratic levels prefer centralization of decision-making.

The involvement of local self-government institutions in development programmes has brought about a reliable data base as well as better feedback in Maharashtra. It will not be a fair expectation that the local body should levy taxes and raise funds for development. There is also discrimination in the allocation of resources which by and large is dependent upon the relationship between the local leaders and the state political leadership.

There appears to be both demoralisation and unprofessionalisation of the functional bureaucracy. The functioning and continuance of the officers deputed to the local bodies depend upon the political patronage they enjoy. The local self-governing institutions fail to take roots not only because of the resistance of the bureaucracy but also because the elected representatives at the state level have become apprehensive of them.

# *Planning, Formulation and Implementation of Development Programme at District and Block Levels*

Considering the wide variability of the conditions existing in different parts of the country, it is difficult to accord the same priority for every region or state for organising development activities. Each area, therefore, should find out what ought to be done for its development and create conditions for a feasible optimum mix of resources keeping in view the overall priorities of the nation and the state concerned.

Unless there is reasonable understanding or knowledge about the possible outcome of the interaction of various sectors such as transport, agriculture, industry in the development process, it is difficult to plan and implement in an effective manner. In other words, it is necessary to have a complete picture of the inter-linkages between the various activities for getting the full benefit of planning. This requires cooperation and coordination between the technocratic and administrative bureaucracies. At present they appear to be at cross purposes and refuse even to share the available information. They resent direct control by elected local agencies. There must be commitment to work for the realisation of the socio-economic goals of development on the part of the agencies responsible for the implementation of programmes and projects.

The process of planning involves a large number of people. It gives opportunities to the people at different levels to think and act in a systematic manner. Planning which does not recognise continuity between the past, the present and the future is not proper planning. The need to take an integrated perspective towards planning, policy formulation and implementation of development programmes is to be borne in mind by all planners and policy makers.

Maharashtra has taken a lead over other states in rural development. Without undermining the importance and role of the existing panchayat raj institutions at the district, block and village levels, the Maharashtra model represents an institutional innovation that deserves to be emulated by other states. But for the guidelines issued for planning, there would not have been any district and block level planning. District planning today is a reality. The size of the district, the composition of its population, the level of development of the district and so forth are the general criteria applied in the allocation of resources to the district. The sectors are classified into the core sector, the minimum needs programmes sector and the general sector. Agriculture and allied subjects such as minor irrigation, fisheries dairying, etc., constitute the core sector while health, education and rural roads come within the minimum needs programmes sector. The rest of the activities form the general sector.

In Maharashtra, district planning is done by the district planning and development council (DPDC) consisting of both officials and non-officials. It also undertakes the implementation of the district plan and its evaluation. The DPDC is headed by the minister in charge of the district, and the district collector is its member-secretary. Two members of the legislature are also nominated to the DPDC by the minister in charge. The DPDC enjoys full freedom in planning and executing district rural development programmes. There is however an inherent danger of the DPDC bypassing the democratically elected zila parishad which cannot easily be contained unless the local leadership is powerful enough.

For the formulation of the district plan initially a task force consisting of the president and chief executive officer of the zila parishad and two members of the legislature nominated by the minister is constituted. They have an intensive dialogue with the district heads of all departments for four or five days. In the light of the discussion, the plan is modified and brought out as the draft plan of the district.

The draft plan is presented before the DPDC for discussion and upon its being approved, it is sent to the state government. The state government represented by the planning secretary, concerned developmental heads and additional



development secretary, discuss the draft plan with the DPDC. In the light of the discussion, the draft plan is modified and sent to the government for final approval.

Area planning has to ensure that the local needs and resources are taken into account and that special attention is paid to the needs of the weaker sections of society. There is increasing awareness in recent years to have an integrated approach to area planning and to plan and implement rural development programmes through a single agency, namely, the DRDA. Without adequate knowledge and appreciation of the aggregative planning methods and goals, local bureaucracy will not be able to undertake effective micro-level planning. In planning for area development, the constraint is more in terms of multiplicity of agencies and programmes, lack of integration of programmes and detailed programme formulation, rather than shortage of financial resources.

In Tamil Nadu, the DDC had earlier included the elected members of the panchayat samiti besides the officials. As the panchayat bodies are superseded, the practice is to include some members of the state legislature in the DDC. The district and block of UP lack in essential inputs in terms of technical expertise for planning and implementation of the IRDP. For the success in planning, implementation and evaluation of development programmes people's participation is an imperative.

## *Reforms and Innovations*

The revenue administration for which the institution of district collector was established, had acquired greater dimension and sensitivity. There has been steady functional proliferation in the collectorate without structural transformation or corresponding increase in its personnel. The age-old Mughal revenue system, which was readily adopted with some minor modifications by the British, remains still dominated by the patwari who has neither adequate job training nor is easily accessible nor available on the spot to the clientele.

In spite of certain innovations for minimising the contacts with the patwari for getting copies of revenue records, etc., he still continues to be preponderant in the village administration. The hierarchical positions above the patwari, namely, the revenue inspector, the naib tahsildar and the sub-divisional officer, and the officers of the land records constitute two separate branches of the revenue administration. Both branches have now been entrusted with many new responsibilities and therefore, they are unable to perform their traditional duties.

The land record agencies must totally be re-organised. There should be sufficient strength of patwaris and process servers to effect full recovery of land revenue. At the middle level, there should be an independent gazetted assistant to the collector to deal with the technical aspects of the land records. The knowledge and efficiency of the patwari must be improved by prescribing higher educational qualifications for the post (minimum graduation) and sending him to periodic in-service training.

The tahsildars and the naib tahsildars, two important links of the revenue administration need to be raised in their status, and they should be provided with transport and adequate

support staff to make them more effective and mobile. The collection of land revenue which is proportionately not very large, should either be discontinued or entrusted entirely to the village panchayat or primary cooperative society. The collection of land revenue is a means by which possession and ownership of land are annually reasserted or re-ensured and it is therefore, the basic responsibility of the revenue administration and not of the village panchayat or primary cooperative. Entrusting the realisation of the land revenue to another agency is tantamount to abdication of its basic responsibility by the revenue administration and will lead to frequent encroachments of the land belonging to the weaker by the stronger and interminable litigation and village feuds. These points were raised by Prof. S.N. Sadasivan, the coordinator of the seminar.

Involvement of the people in the process of development is essential for better results. In states like Gujarat and Maharashtra, the devolution of power on local democratic institution at the village, block and district levels, has led to more realistic planning and better implementation of rural development programmes. There is, therefore, a strong case for strengthening the local democratic institutions in every other state, taking into consideration the socio-cultural environment.

The identification of beneficiaries of each development programme should be done at the village level by the village council (grama sabha) as it knows the actual economic conditions in its jurisdiction. The functioning of democracy at the village level may lead to certain tensions in the beginning and there may be attempts by dominant groups to corner the government assistance exclusively for themselves but as the democratic process becomes active, the weaker sections will assert their rights and claim their due share. The collector and district administration should be in close touch with the people so that they can prevent the privation of the poor. The collector should undertake extensive tour of his district to be in touch with the people and guide the local institutions and communicate their problems to the state government. Democracy becomes meaningful to the people only if it is responsive and responsible to them from the village level to the national.

The requisite technical and administrative skills should be provided to the local institutions. In order to maintain impartiality of the personnel, their recruitment should be done at the district or still higher level by non-political experts. The sub-divisional officer and the collector should have sufficient powers to protect the personnel from victimisation at the hands of partisan politicians. The status and emoluments of the BDO should be enhanced. An efficient district development officer of senior level should be appointed to assist the collector.

The village panchayat or janapada panchayat is mostly a one-man show and the man himself does not have technical and financial skills necessary for carrying out his responsibilities. Hence the non-official agencies involved in rural development must also be given orientation course and also be provided with suitable minimum staff. For example, the village panchayat must have a staff to carry out its functions.

The local democratic institutions will be in a better position to understand the needs of the people and redress their grievances. It cannot be denied that the people have easier access to the elected representatives than the sub-divisional officer or the collector. Entrusting the local institutions with the development functions will enable the collector to find sufficient time for coordination and maintenance of law and order. The collector may be given more powers initially to prevent the probable misuse of funds by the local institutions but they should be progressively revoked as the local institutions become responsible and mature in their dealings by imbibing the spirit of democracy.

All NREP works should be executed by the village panchayat with a team of poor unemployed persons. The village officer should be responsible for proper distribution of funds. The village panchayat should prepare a perspective plan for helping the poor people under the IRDP. It can be formulated with the help of the village officer who will ensure that undue favours are not given to one section of the village at the cost of other sections. The block committee and the BDO will finally approve the plan and make available institutional finance. The block committee should be under the control of the zila parishad. To obviate victimisation of

employees, sub-divisional officer and the collector should have full powers to review and finalise the annual confidential reports of all grades of employees working in the local democratic institutions.

The collector should be authorised to restrain the local institutions from any likely deviations and should also intercede with the state government to get them timely allotment of funds, the necessary expertise and institutional support. In the initial stages, these institutions may need nurturing under the superintendence of the district administration.

The department of social welfare must be reorganised to fulfil the expectations of a welfare state. It should be equipped with better personnel and should organise suitable courses to bring about the desired attitudinal changes in them. The collector in every state should have powers to grant suitable relief or pension as a welfare measure like the collector in Haryana who has the authority to sanction social security pension. Adequate supply of foodgrains according to the prescribed scales should be made in time which in the past failed due to the want of stock in the godowns of the Food Corporation of India.

The financial position of most of the municipalities is very feeble. They are not in a position to provide even the minimum civic amenities. Hence the municipalities should be given liberal grant by the government to discharge their civic obligations.

There should be a separate agency for investigation of crimes because there has been manifold or unprecedented increase in the workload of station house officer. The appointment of public prosecutor should be strictly in terms of the prescribed professional standards and not on political considerations. The feasibility of constituting a cadre of public prosecutors should be seriously examined. In enabling him to share the responsibility of maintaining law and order the district and session judge should also be given appropriately structured orientation courses.

Depending upon the kind of adversities or time and situation, the district administration should extend various relief to different social groups like students, employees and businessmen but it has little resources at its disposal. There-

fore, the district administration should be so linked with the concerned departments that the relief sought could be given promptly. The government should evolve proper schemes for giving compensation to the victims of crimes and natural calamities.

# *Valedictory Observations*

*T.N. Chaturvedi*

It is indeed a very pleasant experience to join the valedictory session of the National Seminar on District Administration. I have no set speech with me and will try to make a few cursory observations in the light of my limited experience.

The design of the seminar is so comprehensively drawn to cover all relevant topics including all the facets of development. It has also given adequate importance to the various problems arising out of the enforcement of law and order and the stresses and strains experienced by the district administrative organisation. The Indian Institute of Public Administration, therefore, deserves to be congratulated for its decision to convene the seminar and for making the necessary arrangements to make it a success. It is the informal contribution of the knowledgeable participants which has added significance to this commendable effort of the Institute.

The seminar has taken a holistic view of the district administration from the developmental perspective and facilitated a broad based participation for the exchange of enormous knowledge and varied experiences. The seminar has provided opportunities for the introspection and review essential for reaffirming the people's faith in the district administration. There is hardly any aspect of administration which does not become a matter of concern of the district administration, directly or indirectly. That is why the wide gamut of realistic and varied experience at this level becomes of immense and lasting value to policy formulation at higher levels.

The Union Home Ministry, of course, has a pivotal position in the administration of law and order. The ministry cannot be a silent spectator at the eruption of violence in different parts of the country and it has to forge a direct link

between the district administration and itself to keep such situations under control and restore peace and harmony indispensable for social life. However, the dilemma manifests in the context of the responsibility for maintaining public order for administrative and political reasons apart from constitutional proprieties.

The task of the district officer today is both complex and enormous. The discretionary authority of the district officer during the pre-independence period in a large measure enabled him to weather the storm of his official life but now after the institution of a democratic set-up, the pressures on the administrative system have assumed a new form, quite unprecedented, on account of "vernacular political leadership" which finds it difficult to appreciate the extent of conflicting requirements on district administration. The district administration cannot therefore, function effectively unless it has a high level of understanding of its socio-political environment, the background and behaviour of different groups, the nature of dispensation of political patronage and the working of powerful political and economic interests.

The numerous pulls and pressures have rendered the role of the district officer more baffling and arduous. In this context, the issue of de-centralisation at all levels of the district administration assumes an imperative character but there is a wide divergence between aspiration and reality calling for positive sensitivity to resolve it. The situation demands that the panchayat raj and cooperative institutions should function vigorously and effectively to relieve the district officer of a considerable part of his functional burden in order to enable him to attend to more important matters like coordination and law and order. The implications of coordination must be properly understood. Similarly, the vital importance of preservation of law and order must not be underrated as a routine task. But at the same time the political executive should see that the vested interests of various kinds do not monopolise all authority in the powerful name of decentralisation.

It is the responsibility of the district administration to undertake planned development at the local, block and district levels. The states which lag behind in development and demo-



cratic decentralisation may take lessons from the experience of Maharashtra which has been well-presented in the seminar. It is also essential that the district administration is also provided with necessary facilities, resources and expertise for the purpose. Administration and financial support must be commensurate with expectations.

The major role of the district administration is planning and implementation of various development programmes and schemes and it involves tremendous tensions. Quite often the district administration has faltered in developmental objectives. Development is a planning exercise to make the best use of scarce resources for the benefit of the people and the district administration finds itself confronted with conflicting claims.

Although development was initially considered for resolving tensions, paradoxically it continues to create new situations of tension by raising controversial questions or due to jolt given to settled power equations. All developmental efforts should be directed to meet the needs of the rural and the weaker sections of society. As the coordinator of the district administration and developmental programmes, the collector is the guardian of the rural poor and the articulate and discreet promoter of their welfare. This is a challenging task and is very often misunderstood by local politicians with narrow vision and who need to have enlightened guidance from above.

At times, of course, the neglect of a region or deprivation of individuals through ages get mixed up with the discharge of the functions of the district administration. It is here that a good deal of administrative perception is called for. It is not, however, correct to say that all problems of law and order have deeper roots or numerous ramifications. The district officer should have the sensitivity to identify one from another and to determine their actual dimensions and deal with them effectively by evolving his own strategies. As the participants have discussed the political aspects of the problems, they have the clarity of thought that enables them to forge new strategies of work. In the legitimate democratic sense the district administration must be insulated from partisan and factional politics. It is not a plea for leaving it

unaccountable. But we must have proper standards to assess administrative performance and to hold it accountable. But it will be tragic to allow it to become plaything of local politics and politicians. This is not the way to get the best out of the experience and idealism that we still find in the district administration. The integrity, impartiality and the sense of fairplay cannot allow to be sacrificed to secure some parochial or passing political ends. It requires a certain degree of understanding and self-regulation on the part of the political masters.

The district administration is undergoing a process of change and I do hope the ideas emerging from the collective deliberation like the seminar will be highly useful to direct it towards the attainment of the objectives of a democratic system striving for development to ensure equity, justice and fairness to the common man irrespective of any distinctions of caste, class, region or religion.

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